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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that staff in non-profit child care centers, compared to those in private centers, tend to receive higher wages, express greater job satisfaction and commitment, and are better trained and more experienced in child care. This study presents results of a survey of 32 staff members in 2 private and 3 non-profit centers in New Zealand. Staff were asked about qualifications, work history, motivations for working in child care, the most and least favorable aspects of their work, and how they saw the future of child care in New Zealand. In addition, four workers were interviewed in depth--three from private centers, one from a non-profit center--about their relationships with their employers and the rewards and difficulties of their work situations. Survey and interview results indicated that, in general, workers in privately owned centers experienced poorer conditions than their colleagues in non-profit centers, and several gave accounts of harassment by their employer, including direct threats and intimidation. These results are considered in light of the historical context for child care in New Zealand, including important social trends such as the feminist resurgence of the 1970s. Significant theories that have affected social attitudes toward women and child care are also described, and their relevance to the trends indicated by the present study is outlined. The study argues that despite significant advances in the unionization and professionalization of child care workers, women in this field are still motivated primarily by the intrinsic rewards of the work. (HTH)

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WOMEN, CAPITALISM AND FEMINISATION: WORKERS' EXPERIENCES IN PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT CHILDCARE CENTRES

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the Degree of

Master of Education

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1992

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Abstract

The operation of childcare centres for profit has long been a contentious issue in early childhood circles. Research in New Zealand and overseas has shown that staff in non-profit centres, compared to those in private centres, tend to receive higher average wages, have lower rates of staff turnover, receive more benefits, are more likely to have paid breaks and non-contact time, are more likely to view their work as a career, express greater job satisfaction and commitment, are better trained in early childhood care and education and are more experienced in childcare.

The present study surveyed 32 staff in five Christchurch childcare centres; two of the centres were privately owned. Staff were asked about qualifications, work history, their motivations for working in childcare, the most and least favourable aspects of their work, differences between their current centre and other centres they had worked in and how they saw their future in childcare and the future of childcare in New Zealand.

In addition, four childcare workers were interviewed in depth; three of them were working in privately owned centres. The interviews mainly focused on the women's relationships with their employer(s), including the pleasures and difficulties of their work situations.

Workers in privately owned centres were found to be generally experiencing poorer conditions than their colleagues in non-profit centres and several gave accounts of harassment by their employer, including direct threats and intimidation.

The results of these surveys and interviews are considered in the light of the historical context for childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand, including important social trends such as the feminist resurgence of the 1970s. Significant theories which have impacted on social attitudes to women and childcare are also described and their relevance to the trends indicated by the present study is outlined.

The study argues that, despite significant advances in the unionisation and 'professionalisation' of childcare workers in recent times, women who work in this field are still overwhelmingly motivated by the intrinsic rewards of their work. This trend, it is argued, stems from the persistence of the 'cult of mothering' which developed in western capitalist societies in the late 1800s, which has led to the overwhelming 'feminisation' of childcare work.

The study concludes by briefly considering the unresolved questions raised by the study ,and the possibilities for change in the way society values the work of caring for and educating young children as proposed by socialist feminist analyses.

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Introduction

Since time immemorial, and for a multitude of reasons, women, and sometimes men, have needed to secure care for their young children outside the home. For many families, informal arrangements with other family members have been the norm but for many others, more formal arrangements have been necessary. New Zealand's history of formal extra-familial care is lengthy and fascinating; kindergartens and creches were established in parts of New Zealand as early as the 1860s and childcare services in New Zealand are now well-established and extensive. Thousands of children are currently cared for in creches and childcare centres throughout New Zealand, offering relief from the challenges of parenting and allowing thousands of people, particularly women, to participate in life outside the home. The benefits to children, their families and society arising from good quality early childhood education and care are now well documented, although the struggle to maintain the political will to provide such services goes on. In the midst of this the workers, mainly women who provide childcare services have often been overlooked in debates about provision and quality.

The Literature Concerning Childcare Services in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Despite the lengthy history of childcare services, there is not a great deal of literature surrounding the field. Discussion of the needs of women who have young children is characteristically absent from both educational and sociological

writing, with the exception of some feminist debate. In the educational field there is no shortage of child development literature concerning young children but it is only recently that researchers have begun to look at young children in context. When this has occurred in relation to extra-familial care, the results of such research have sometimes been used against women, to justify political and economic agendas. In recent times there has also been an increase in the amount of literature concerning women's place in the work force, largely due to the world-wide increase in awareness of feminist concerns. Much of this writing has identified the need for childcare provision as a key to advancing women's place in the world outside the home. Increasingly, there is some excellent literature concerning the necessary ingredients of good quality childcare and how such ingredients might be secured but again this literature has tended to focus on the child and the factors necessary for their optimal development.

The Marginalisation of Childcare Workers

Within the small body of literature concerning childcare there remains one group which has received almost no attention whatsoever. Childcare workers are the third party in the childcare triangle, along with children and their parents and they are the key to its provision. Some recent literature defining quality childcare has begun to look at the place of staff in maintaining quality and the characteristics of the staff in good quality centres but there is still much research to be done. For decades childcare workers have remained a marginalised group. This has been due to a wide variety of social and political reasons and these social forces have manifested themselves in the lives and working conditions of childcare workers.

Childcare workers have always posed dilemmas for society. At best they have been characterised as 'superwomen', able to withstand the constant stresses of caring for large groups of small children. They have been viewed as patient, nurturing and selfless, concerned for their young charges before themselves, a role akin to the 'madonna' view of mothers. At worst, childcare workers have been labelled as a destructive force, allowing women to abdicate their 'true' responsibilities for the care of their children, acting in effect as home-wreckers who willingly interrupt the 'sacred bond' between a mother and her small child.

The marginalisation of childcare workers in New Zealand is particularly evident in their industrial history. Childcare workers have tended to be young, untrained and poorly paid, with high rates of mobility between jobs. As a political force, childcare workers are very new, with no industrial award in place until as recently as 1984, their industrial union having only been formed in 1982. This late development in industrial awareness signifies one of the dilemmas of the childcare worker's role. Unionisation of childcare workers was for many years considered distasteful; people who cared for young children in such an intimate way were considered beyond such activities - the next step would seem to be wages and unionisation for mothers. By the late 1980s however, and certainly due in large part to the support of the feminist movement, childcare workers had become a cohesive and well-organised group both philosophically and industrially with an efficient national industrial union and four registered awards in place.

Another feature of workers in childcare has been their increasingly high levels of training; from a total absence of state-provided childcare training in the late 1970s, training for childcare workers has expanded to the point where all

Colleges of Education now offer three-year integrated early childhood programmes, catering for both childcare and kindergarten training combined. Also in the late 1980s, the political will to support childcare services became considerably stronger, during the term of New Zealand's fourth Labour government. By 1990 the state was providing vastly increased amounts of funding with the aim of supporting staff wages and training as well as decreasing fees to parents and improving facilities in centres.

Private Provision of Childcare Services

Both the growth of childcare services in New Zealand and changes in the conditions of workers in the field have been erratic, despite recent government initiatives to set standards of childcare provision through funding and regulation. One of the reasons for this erratic growth has been the absence of state interest in childcare services until recent times. Since their inception in New Zealand during the 1800s, the types of childcare centres available have been a 'mixed bag', not just in the facilities offered but in the way they have been owned and managed. State provision of early childhood services has been almost entirely restricted to the kindergarten movement and, historically, childcare centres were unhindered by monitoring or regulation. This has meant that private providers, as well as community, charitable and other interest groups, have been free to establish childcare services and manage them however they saw fit. This was particularly true prior to 1960, when regulations were first set in place to govern childcare services, and prior to the 1980s, when childcare workers began to organise industrially. Private provision of childcare services continues to be common in New Zealand. Private providers also currently enjoy the same levels of funding (and regulation) as all other early childhood centres. All childcare

centres are run essentially as small businesses; the distinction between privately owned centres and other types is that privately owned centres are operated for the financial gain of the owners *in addition* to any other goals the owners wish to achieve.

Staff in Private Childcare Centres

There is some evidence to suggest that the training, working conditions and experiences of staff in privately owned childcare centres tend to vary in important ways from those of staff in centres with other types of management structure. For example, the majority of centres employing staff under the National Award, by far the least attractive of the four industrial awards, are privately owned, whilst centres employing staff under more generous conditions tend to be owned by 'non-profit' interests. There is also some evidence, gathered by the childcare workers' industrial union, to suggest that the working conditions of staff in private centres are also less attractive in rather more subtle ways, ways which often eventually surface via industrial complaints procedures; industrial complaints tend to surface more often in privately owned childcare centres than in centres of any other type.

Theories About Childcare Provision

The whole notion of the provision of early childhood care for profit remains a hotly debated topic in the childcare field. Arguments tend to arise from fundamental ideological differences concerned with socialist agendas for welfare provision and feminist agendas for the advancement of women, versus right - wing agendas for the privatisation of the welfare state, the commodification of all

forms of labour and the 'right' to make a profit. The consequences of both sides of this debate are already in evidence in New Zealand, where childcare centres, along with hospitals and rest homes, have been established for private gain as well as in response to community needs.

There is very little theoretical writing surrounding debates about extra-familial care, even though the consideration of childcare from a theoretical point of view brings together a wide range of key ideas about women and society. Essentially, these ideas stem from women's position as childbearers and their parallel role of childrearers and homemakers. In particular, the link between childcare and mothering has had a number of consequences, not only for women who place their children in childcare, but for women who work in childcare centres, in both cultural and economic terms. Cook (1983a) states:

> The interests of the child have been and will continue to be paramount, but it is my contention that, in contrast to what one could term the everyday practice of childcare, any theoretical and political analysis of childcare involves a shift of emphasis from a focus on the child to that of women: to women as childbearers and childrearers, to women as the principal users of childcare, the main providers of childcare and women as childcare workers (p. 3).

Four theoretical perspectives on women and childcare are particularly relevant to this study. *Maternal deprivation theory* has had an enormous impact on attitudes towards mothering and childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand since the 1950s. *Liberal feminism*, to the forefront during the 1970s feminist resurgence, must also be considered as it relates to women in the workplace and the value of caring and nurturing work. The theoretical basis of *socialist feminism* is particularly relevant for its views of society and society's obligations to women and families, and in particular the link between the family and the economic role of women. Finally, in order to understand the current context for childcare in

Aotearoa/New Zealand, it is essential to understand the basis of *neo-liberal* theories as they relate to the economic value of the work of caring for and, in particular, educating young children in the 1990s.

The Present Study

This study is particularly concerned with the working conditions of staff in private, as compared to non-profit childcare centres. It attempts to identify the ways, if any, in which workers' conditions of service differ, according to the type of ownership structure of the centre in which they are employed. It is also concerned with the more qualitative types of conditions childcare workers experience, according to the type of centre in which they work.

The two research questions specifically addressed are:

1. To what extent, if any, are workers in privately owned childcare centres subject to poorer conditions of service than their counterparts in centres with other types of management structure?

2. In what way(s), if any, do the experiences of childcare workers differ, specifically in relation to their experience of the management structures of the centre in which they work, according to whether the centre is, or is not, privately owned?

These themes are particularly relevant to childcare in New Zealand in the 1990s as it responds, once again, to a marked shift in political will by central government. Issues such as the privatisation of welfare services, particularly

health and education, the restriction of women's work opportunities by withdrawing support for pay equity and early childhood services, and the increasing trend towards a 'market-driven' economy in which women and children traditionally benefit least, will clearly have a major impact on childcare provision. Childcare workers stand to suffer on a number of counts, not only by being in a field subject to erratic ideological and material support but because they are, by a vast majority, women themselves. In a deregulated labour market, childcare workers suffer heavily due to their lack of training and job security, particularly if they are parents themselves. Recent trends in government support for childcare provision would suggest that workers in both private and non-profit centres will continue to experience job insecurity and poor conditions of service.

It must be stated however that many privately owned centres were established, and continue to be run, with an agenda of responding to the needs of women and their children. Private ownership of a centre cannot be *automatically* construed as evidence of its poor quality of provision for programmes for children, nor can it be automatically assumed that its staff are subject to unfair treatment; neo-liberal theorists in fact argue that private provision leads to enhanced quality in the delivery of services. Although it is not within the scope of this study to identify the many factors affecting the quality of centre environments, there is evidence to suggest that the working conditions of staff are strongly correlated to the type of programme provided for the children (Smith & Swain, 1988).

Outline of Chapters

Chapter one describes the historical context for the provision of extra-familial care in Aotearoa/New Zealand, up to and including the first regulations governing childcare centres in the early 1960s. By describing the prevalent ideological frameworks of the time, including the development of the 'cult of mothering', the division of the kindergarten and childcare movements, and the impact of maternal deprivation theory, this chapter provides a background for the discussion of later developments in conditions for childcare workers.

Chapter two concentrates on the period from 1970 to 1980, incorporating the 'second wave' of feminism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Feminist debates served to highlight the need for childcare provision in order to support the growing aspirations of women who wished to enter the 'public sphere'. The two most important bodies of theory relevant to these debates, liberal feminism and socialist feminism, are discussed in the chapter, as they relate to women's arguments for childcare provision.

Chapter three begins with a description of the emerging industrial consciousness of childcare workers in the 1980s and the struggle to gain social and industrial recognition for their role. The chapter also records the increasing neo-liberalism of the decade from 1980 to 1990, outlining the theoretical basis for the economic trends of this period which have impacted heavily on women and children. The outcomes for childcare of government policy based on neo-liberal economic theory are described, as are the notable ways in which childcare has gained government recognition and funding against obvious trends in economic policy.

Chapter four briefly describes the parameters of this study and the methods by which material was gathered. A summary of the results of the written survey conducted for the study is contained in Chapter five. This chapter provides important quantitative data concerning the similarities and differences between industrial conditions in private, as compared to non-profit, childcare centres. Chapter six summarises the four interviews which were conducted for the study and, in doing so, highlights a series of key industrial and theoretical concerns, as well as personal concerns of the women interviewed.

The results and concerns identified in Chapters five and six are analysed in Chapter seven in the context of the historical and theoretical trends outlined in Chapters one, two and three. This chapter directly addresses the material gathered for the study as it relates to the original research questions. In particular, the chapter discusses the concept of 'feminisation' in the context of childcare work, and the way in which capitalist economies rely upon the alienation of women from their work with young children. The study concludes with a brief discussion of the possibilities for change in society's view of childcare work, as proposed by socialist feminist analyses.

Chapter one

Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand: 1870 - 1970

The history of the development of childcare provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand is one of struggle, not only about practical issues such as funding and staffing, but against a host of myths and social pressures which have traditionally faced women caring for other women's children. In order to make sense of this struggle it is necessary to have an understanding of the history of childcare services in New Zealand. At the same time, it is also necessary to understand the principle ideologies concerning the role and purpose of early childhood education and care which have influenced and reflected this history. In particular, the legacy of the development of the *'cult of mothering'* and the division of care and education in pre-school services will be considered here. The influence of *maternal deprivation theory*, which had such an enormous impact on pre-school care and education in western countries following World War II, will also be discussed, including feminist theoretical perspectives on why the theory had so much success.

1870 - 1900: Mothering, Childminding and Charity

From the beginning, attitudes about the extra-familial care of young children have embodied political and social expectations which women have had to reject in order to establish and staff childcare services. This has stemmed primarily from the view of childcare as a low-status charitable and welfare service, rather than as part of the country's education system, and is also related to concerns

about women (i.e. mothers) and their place in the family and workforce. These themes have recurred for more than 100 years and have contributed to a view of childcare workers as the 'poor relations' of kindergarten teachers.

Simpson (1970), in her history of the Free Kindergarten movement in New Zealand, states that New Zealand's first kindergartens were designed to cater primarily for the need for child welfare agencies. These early 'kindergartens' were essentially charitable institutions designed to provide custodial care for the "little ragged, unkempt, bare-footed children spilt about the streets" (p. 7).

Such creches, for this was what these 'kindergartens' were in practice, had existed sporadically in several of New Zealand's main centres by 1900, beginning in Christchurch in 1869 (Nuttall, 1989) and with the Dunedin Creche Association in 1879 (Levitt, 1979). These early childcare centres battled to secure premises and funding and, whilst their appeal to the charitable instincts of the middle classes ensured some success, it was short-lived and many centres struggled to remain open (Nuttall, 1989).

Women Supporting Women

New Zealand's first Kindergarten Association, which would eventually join others in forming the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union, was established in Dunedin in 1889, and, in time, it flourished. In explaining the reasons for this success, Levitt (1979) points to differences in the philosophies of the two emerging services - whilst the creches were designed to support working women, the kindergartens were more concerned with the transmission of

middle-class values to working-class mothers, including the importance of domestic motherhood.

This philosophy was not surprising, since the drive to provide these first early childhood services had come from socially aware middle-class women who were concerned about the poverty and depravity into which many women and young children were falling. For example, in 1898 a large public meeting was held in Christchurch to establish the "Canterbury Children's Aid Society". Mr O'Bryen Hoare, speaking at the meeting, urged the need to "remove many children from our streets" who "lived practically in the gutter".

> From information he had received.....at least forty children in Christchurch were living in degradation; and the fact that women were now taking a leading part in the reform augured well for the future success of the Society (Applause) (cited in Nuttall, 1989).

He, and other speakers, were referring to working class mothers who could not find help for the care of their children whilst they held down paid positions (ironically, often as childminders to wealthier families), and whose children were without food and adequate supervision. An important aspect of these early childcare services was the attempt to educate working class mothers about the domestic arts through evening sessions at the creches and kindergartens; many creches also re-distributed second-hand clothing (Nuttall, 1989).

This meant that the women working to establish creches and kindergartens were faced with an essential contradiction. As Cook (1985) says,

> .....the creche system.....embodied a tacit acceptance of the role of women working outside the home at a time when middle class values were trying to set an example of domestic motherhood within the home (p.17).

The Development of the 'Cult of Mothering'

This identification of parenting as a task specifically aligned with mothers is a relatively new concept both socially and historically, and can be traced to the rise of capitalism in Western democracies during the 1800s. A key aspect of the growth of capitalism was the removal of the site of the production of goods and services from the home and this completely redefined the traditional work of women. As Chodorow (1979) points out,

> Until very recently, women everywhere participated in most forms of production.....With the development of capitalism, however, and the industrialization that followed, production outside the home expanded greatly, while production within the home declined (p. 88).
>
> The rise of capitalist industrialization has made the household an exclusive parent and small child realm. It has removed men from the household and parenting responsibilities. Infant and child care has become the exclusive domain of biological mothers (p. 94).

The new 'cult of mothering' led to an ideology of women as 'natural' parents and contributed to the rise of what Chodorow calls the "affective work" necessary in the home to ensure continued adult male participation in the world of paid work.

The First Childcare Workers

Cook describes the history of childcare services in New Zealand as "the hidden past", due to society's negative attitudes about women who could not, or did not, wish to care for their young children at home.

> The idea that some women were not able, or did not wish to take full time responsibility for the care of their young children has been difficult to accept, and any services supposedly supporting the idea have had to exist apart as something aberrant (1985, p. 15).

In order to avoid the inherent contradiction between promoting motherhood and providing extra-familial care, the early proponents of creches and kindergartens, and, in particular, the women who staffed these facilities, characterised themselves as agents of 'social rescue'.

This early view of childcare as something "aberrant" has had spin-offs for early childhood professionals, both kindergarten teachers and childcare workers. The women who staffed these early facilities were characterised by their patrons as self-less and progressive angels, devoted to children, yet firm in their management of them. Simpson (1970) describes the recruitment of the Dunedin Association's first kindergarten teacher thus:

> He [the Rev. Dr Waddell] had heard from Miss Kelsey of a trained teacher, Miss Wieneke, who had a sort of kindergarten in a small way at Papanui in Christchurch. He visited her and explained the scheme, and, since she was very interested in the missionary character of the work, she agreed to become the teacher of the first kindergarten in New Zealand (1970, p. 7) [1].

A part of this idealised view of women who care for young children was that they did it for love, not for money; this would certainly seem to be true in the case of Miss Wieneke, who gave up her own business to minister to the 'poor children' of Dunedin.

The basis of the social arguments for and against creches and kindergartens of the day reveal an interesting combination of beliefs and it is clear that proponents of the early creche and kindergarten movements were not always of similar ideological backgrounds (Nuttall, 1989). There was undoubtedly a neo-colonial

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[1] It is interesting to note the way this statement contradicts itself regarding the Dunedin Association's long-held claim that it opened the first kindergarten (i.e. "free" kindergarten) in New Zealand in 1889. Nuttall (1989) has documented the existence of several kindergartens established in Christchurch prior to 1889, including non-fee-paying establishments.

concern that the new country should not repeat the mistakes of the old by allowing an underclass of poor and destitute citizens to emerge, and this is reflected in comments such as those reported by Simpson (1970). These concerns were combined with the missionary attitudes of the kindergarten pioneers who were genuinely motivated agents of social rescue; the extent to which the suffrage movement was involved, with its promotion of rights for women, is less clear. There were also some authentically liberal arguments for providing care for children in order to allow their mothers to work outside the home (Nuttall, 1989).

The significance of this period for the future of childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and for this present study, cannot be overlooked. The belief that women would, and indeed should, work in childcare for love, in combination with the predominance of the charitable view of childcare provision, has continued to be reflected in the low wages of childcare workers and expectations about the level of voluntary input by women into early childhood services (Horsfield, 1988). Indeed, it was implied, not only was it in women's nature to care for young children without remuneration, but it was their responsibility; these early creches were also seen as providing ideal opportunities for young middle class women to gain experience which would prepare them for motherhood (Nuttall, 1989). The development of the cult of mothering ensured that the care of other people's young children, like motherhood, would not be taken seriously, as a 'profession'.

1900-1960: The Division of Care and Education

The early establishment of an atmosphere of charity and welfare surrounding extra-familial care, aligning it with the poor, orphanages and destitute women, impacted on childcare services for the next sixty years, particularly in light of their relationship with the Free Kindergarten movement. Cook (1985) argues that, despite early hopes of integrating charitable aid, early childhood education, and support for working mothers, the division of care and education was present right from the start of the early childhood movement in New Zealand.

> What began as an ideal, to provide both care and education, was reshaped, with the education component finding a haven within the kindergarten service, and the care component remaining amidst the hidden realities of privatised child minding and baby farming (1985, p. 17).

The Rise of the Free Kindergarten Movement

As the free kindergarten movement slowly grew and expanded this division increased in strength. From the turn of the century and until the term of the first Labour government, the kindergarten movement grew sporadically and not without continued struggle, in part due to the history of kindergartens as charitable agencies. Even though the training of kindergarten teachers had begun in Auckland in 1909,

> [the] kindergarten or infant school was still associated with unfortunate children who lived lives of deprivation. The New Zealand Government ensured that injustice to infants would continue when, in 1909, it gave the kindergarten movement a capitation grant of £2 on the average attendance of children provided an equal sum was raised locally (Cumming & Cumming, 1978, p. 180).

By the time of New Zealand's first Labour government however, the importance of kindergartens as educational institutions was clearly in favour. The new government was sympathetic to concerns for the future of New Zealand society and how a better society might be shaped through quality early childhood experience.

Until the late 1940s there was no real attempt to consider the issue of childcare provision. A spin-off of the first Labour government's 1944 Conference on Education was the establishment of the country's first formal review of early childhood services, the Consultative Committee on Pre-School Education (the Bailey report). The committee included various government officials, and the Play Centres Association, the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union and the National Council of Women represented the interests of women and the early childhood sector. The Bailey report, released in 1947, marked a turning point for the kindergarten movement in New Zealand, recommending that the Government institute a comprehensive state-funded and administered pre-school service; this was at a time when only five percent of the country's pre-schoolers attended kindergartens, play centres or day nurseries (Cumming & Cumming, p. 286).

As far as childcare was concerned however, the report roundly rejected the idea of nursery schools or any other types of full day care services, particularly if they were to be government funded, and strongly reaffirmed the demand for kindergarten services. This was, in part, a reflection of attitudes to extra-familial care which were developing in relation to another initiative which had been introduced by Labour, the nursery school.

The Nursery Schools

In an attempt to both address the need for early childhood care and the belief that secondary schools should provide students with experience of practical aspects of every day life, the Labour government had promoted the concept of nursery schools, combining full day care and education, and this idea enjoyed brief popularity (Cook, 1985).

A feature of nursery schools was that they were attached to secondary schools so that they might also provide a resource for homecraft classes. In this way, girls became versed not only in the domestic arts of cooking and sewing, but in the care of infants and young children, in the same way that young women seventy years before had been presented with such opportunities in early creches and kindergartens. This again effectively reinforced the link between childcare and mothering.

The Bailey report was most emphatic however in stating that the nursery school was not an ideal environment for young children and in doing so reflected the deep post-war conservatism of the time.

> Young children spending the whole day from Monday to Friday in a nursery school are deprived of the vital experiences that only a normal home can provide (Bailey report, 1947, p. 11)

The Playcentre Movement

At the same time as nursery schools were being established, the Playcentre movement, with its emphasis on parental (i.e. maternal) involvement, was beginning its growth. Initially, playcentres had begun in Wellington and

Christchurch in 1941 with the aim of providing shared childcare facilities for mothers whose husbands were overseas on active service. However these groups rapidly became focused on the importance of the home as the most ideal environment for young children. The adherence by the Playcentre movement to this view, a position which gained strength over time, was later to also contribute to criticisms of the childcare movement and childcare workers, particularly those centres providing full day care for young children.

The Continuing Invisibility of Childcare

Despite the increased emphasis on early childhood education and care through kindergartens and play centres, centres providing childcare for working mothers remained hidden. The ways in which the war changed the expectations of women has not been well documented, but Cook (1985) suggests that more comprehensive childcare provision was hoped for by women after the war but that this was not realised. Women had been encouraged to move into the workforce during the war years, resulting in a major change of role for many mothers. In response to increased demands for childcare, a few half-day kindergartens extended their hours but this did not continue post-war and the Playcentre movement's early emphasis on relief from the task of mothering became replaced by concentration on its educational values and parental involvement.

During the 1950s the kindergarten and Playcentre movements flourished, providing the government with a cheap alternative to nursery schools and a neat political solution, at least in the short-term, to demands for relief for mothers, whilst re-emphasising the importance of those service's educational role.

During the 1950s, maternal deprivation theory, based on the writings of John Bowlby, was also in its ascendancy and its emphasis on exclusive maternal care of infants neatly coincided with political pressure on women to return to the home, freeing paid work opportunities for the male workforce.

The Influence of Maternal Deprivation Theory

Morgan (1975) argues that maternal deprivation theory has been extremely powerful in influencing the way society views childcare.

> Briefly stated, the theory is that the *unbroken care of one mother* is vital to every infant, not just for its immediate welfare and contentment, but for its future mental and emotional health. It has been a definite scientific discovery, we are told, that deprivation of this indivisible mother-love in infancy leads to irreversible personality damage of a more or less serious kind, having a wide range of ill-effects both on the individual and society (1975, p. 11, author's emphasis).

Maternal deprivation theory fell entirely within the established context of the cult of mothering and reinforced the belief that the care of young children was primarily women's work. During the 1950s, conservative elements wishing to reinforce this view of motherhood, sought to give scientific credence to the belief that the biological mother should be primarily responsible for work in the private sphere. Chodorow (1979) argues that the widespread acceptance of maternal deprivation theory, outlined by John Bowlby in his book *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (1953) was closely linked to the patriarchal need for 'mothers'.

> Post-Freudian psychology and sociology has provided new rationales for the idealization and enforcement of women's maternal role, as it has emphasized the crucial importance of the mother-child relationship for the child's development.....This crucial mothering role contributes not only to child development but also the the reproduction of male supremacy (Chodorow, 1979, pp. 5 - 6).

Wearing (1984) makes the link between motherhood and the related area of capitalist economics.

> [Ideas] emanating from post-war research into the development of children separated from their families during the war (e.g. Bowlby, 1953) which stress the importance of 'the child's tie to his mother' have been aligned with the interests of capital although not necessarily with the economic interests of the family and have become an important element in the ideology of motherhood (1984, p. 19).

Bowlby's work coincided with the political ideology of the post-war period, which stressed that women who had entered the workforce during the war to fill the 'manpower shortage' should now return to the home. Men returning from the war were to be allowed to resume their rightful economic place as the breadwinner and women were expected to have children. The post-war baby boom was the outcome of this ideology and it was neatly underpinned by the 'scientific' theory of maternal deprivation.

Morgan (1975) exposes the ideological nature of maternal deprivation theory as not so much a scientifically supported theory, but as an ideology, which has hugely shaped social attitudes and beliefs in Western countries since the war.

> The theory is representative of a network of ideas which have become established in the last couple of decades or so. One could call this network an ideology, since it combines fact with value judgements, theory with practice, explanation with emotive reassurance, in a way that provides maximum insulation from rational criticism at any given point (1975, p. 11).

Morgan points out that that the theory is largely psychoanalytic in origin and not supported by well-controlled experiments and investigations in psychology. This in itself is not a problem except that the general public, including decision-making bodies, have come to believe that the principles of the theory *are grounded in scientific fact*, and that these principles must therefore be adhered to. Morgan further points out:

> It has also been used to enforce an unnecessary social seclusion on women with consequent wastage of their abilities and impoverishment of their lives. Over the last few decades there is hardly an ill that flesh is heir to that has not been laid at the door of a lack of maternal care and devotion. The weight of guilt and fear pressing on woman has been, and continues to be, enormous (1975, pp. 19 - 20).

Maternal deprivation theory clearly laid childcare workers open to renewed attack as people whose work would destroy the crucial bond between mother and child. Unfortunately, we know very little about childcare workers of this time or their motivations, either from contemporary accounts or more recent scholarship, as childcare provision was thoroughly hidden.

The period from 1900 to 1960 is chiefly notable in the early childhood arena for the development of the kindergarten and Playcentre movements, which remain strong today. From the point of view of childcare, the period is notable for the overwhelming invisibility of childcare services and conservative social beliefs about the role of women in relation to young children, beliefs which were able to be conveniently put aside in wartime, but which re-emerged with a vengeance after World War II. It was not until the very end of the 1950s that childcare was to gain any kind of widespread recognition as a social issue, and only then in reaction to a public scandal.

1960 - 1970: Childcare Becomes a Public Issue

By 1956, 32% of the female workforce of New Zealand was married. Who cared for their young children by day, particularly those who did not have close friends or relatives in a position to provide care? Cook (1985) documents the consequences of lack of childcare provision in the late 1950s:

> As the Government had side stepped responsibility towards childcare in its new commitment to E.C.E. [early childhood education], it became the domain of unco-ordinated small scale private enterprise, along with a few charitable/church institutions. There had mushroomed, unsupervised, childcare services operated by untrained women workers in private homes (1985, p. 26).

It seemed therefore inevitable that a scandal would result, and so it did, with a police raid on an Auckland childcare centre which exposed the worst possible scenario: a large group of ill, dirty children, unsupervised and crowded into a suburban home (Smith & Swain, 1988, p. 66)

The Child Care Centres Regulations 1960 were the government's response to this scandal. These regulations were mainly concerned with the minimum physical provisions of childcare centres and did little to address the types of activities presented for the children or to demand better standards of staff training. Cook points out that subsequent to the gazetting of these regulations, only two of the 40 centres applying for licences in 1961 were able to meet regulation standard, reflecting the very poor standards of centres of the day (1985, p. 27).

As part of the regulations, childcare services became the domain of the Child Welfare Division (then part of the Department of Education but transferred to the Department of Social Welfare when it was created in 1972). This effectively re-emphasized the distinction between kindergartens as the providers of 'education' and childcare centres as the providers of 'care'.

Increasing Childcare Provision and Issues of Quality

Throughout the 1960s, private childcare centres continued to open, responding to the increasing demand for childcare services. Sonja Davies, first President of the New Zealand Child Care Centres Association (now Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa- New Zealand Childcare Association) describes her battle to gain official recognition for childcare in her autobiography *Bread and Roses* (1984).

> I went along to the Head Office of the then Department of Child Welfare, obtained the names and addresses of all child care centre owners or committees, and went home and wrote to them proposing the formation of a National Association of Child Care Centres.....and on 14 October 1963, the inaugural meeting of.....the New Zealand Childcare Association was held.....
>
> I told the meeting how I had approached both the Free Kindergarten Association and the Playcentre Federation to see whether child care could become part of either organisation but had been firmly turned down..... (1984, p. 143).

As the organisation grew and its policies became better publicised, the struggle to promote quality childcare became more heated.

> The inference was that these mothers would then live a high life caring nothing for their unwanted babies. Cries of totalitarianism and Communist plots were added for good measure. But in the early sixties, all we had to cope with was antagonism and suspicion from the other two pre-school organisations and almost total opposition from Members of Parliament of both parties (ibid, p. 145).

During this time, overall standards of care in childcare centres were poor and staff training almost non-existent.

> In Auckland the centres were many and widely scattered.....some of very good quality but many really bad. The people running them were not badly intentioned, but they obviously had little idea of children's needs in a properly run day care centre. They had no education programme and little or no play equipment, and as a result the children seemed listless and lacklustre (ibid.).

The provision of training became a top priority for the fledgling association and lobbying for quality childcare provision continued at the highest level.

> Some politicians still have a very conservative view of child care.....I described [to a politician of the day] the splendid women who worked for peanuts to care for the children of mothers who for a variety of reasons were in the paid work force and outlined several case studies, but I could tell it was not getting across. He was no different from any number of politicians of both political parties, but I felt that the Labour Party ought to understand the needs of working mothers and their children better than most (ibid., p. 146).

Despite the persistent efforts of the association, little progress was made in the advocacy and provision of childcare between 1960 and 1970. Although centres were now subject to regulation, they remained well hidden, staff were generally untrained and often volunteer, and there was little government recognition via legislation or funding; there was certainly no prospect of widespread recognition of the work of staff in such centres.

The philosophy of volunteerism and 'doing it for love', so evident 100 years before, remained as the dominant ethos and childcare centres operated completely outside the realm of their 'sister services', the Playcentres and kindergartens. These services had settled upon philosophies based on the importance of pre-school education but retained maternal involvement, ensuring that they would continue to receive mainstream support, including government

funding. Childcare, on the other hand, continued to be hidden and stigmatised as a low-status, 'backyard' service, used by those 'in need', rather than by choice.

It would not be until the upsurge of feminist demands in the 1970s that childcare would receive any profile as a public issue.

Chapter two

1970 - 1980: Childcare and the feminist debate

The period from 1970 to 1980 saw a major upheaval in western capitalist nations based on the so-called 'second wave' of feminism, also known as the Women's Liberation Movement. This massive social movement had major implications for the roles which men and women were to take, not just in the care of children, and was to send ripples throughout the public and private worlds of western families. Whilst it is clear that many of the major goals of the Women's Liberation Movement have not been achieved, its impact on childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been enormous.

Feminist initiatives during the 1970s had their roots principally in liberal feminist theories about women's potential role in society. More recently, socialist feminist theories have emerged from feminist struggles to make sense of the complexity of society's relations according to race, gender and class. This chapter will discuss these two principle theories and place them in the context of events which took place in the childcare arena in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the 1970s.

The feminist movement of the 1970s renewed debate about childcare services, prompted by the reappraisal of women's roles and of the family, as well as by concerns about the quality of care being offered for young children. Cook (1985) states that:

> In many ways the women's movement and the concern over the rights of children meshed together as an overall concern for social justice, yet in the argument over childcare provision the coalition was tenuous. Feminists demanded that women be relieved of some of their childrearing load and looked to men, the community, the government and the workplace to play a role. The issue of childcare was therefore caught up in a reappraisal of family life.....
>
> Childcare was starting to be an option for women who wished to pursue careers. These women who were products of a 'good education' and 'good homes' could not be termed unfortunate or aberrant.....[Their] middle class background [would] provide a power base towards changing values previously upheld as sacred by the middle classes themselves.....(1985, p. 30).

These arguments supporting women's return to "the community, the government and the workplace" had their basis in liberal feminist theory. Liberal feminists sought to remove gender divisions, in the public sphere in particular, to allow women to reach their full potential.

The Basis of Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism has its roots in the writings of 18th century liberal philosophers, and particularly those of Mary Wollstonecraft and J.S. Mill. Briefly, liberal theory relies upon a view of society comprised of rational and autonomous individuals who understand the distinction between good and evil and are consistent in the pursuit of their own ends. Liberty and freedom are key notions in liberal theory, and are based on the achievement of a state of equality between individuals, and concern for justice and fairness. From these pre-requisites, justice in the economic system is purported to arise, despite minimum involvement of the state in the lives of individuals. The states's role is to ensure protection of the rights of individuals to do as they please, particularly in their private lives, provided that no-one else is harmed. Individuals should be free to pursue the course in life they desire, but for

liberal theorists, the pursuit of intellectual ends is considered the most fulfilling option.

Liberal Feminist Perspectives

According to Jaggar (1983), liberal feminists argue that women are restricted in their pursuit of the process of self-determination by a system of anti-woman discrimination, usually based in custom, but sometimes within the law. Assumptions about appropriate roles have been imposed upon women and this has led them into fields of employment which have limited their economic independence. Lack of independence for women has also been reflected in the loss of control over primarily women's issues, such as contraception and abortion.

Jaggar suggests that the aim of liberal feminists is to see women fully integrated into the 'public' sphere, (i.e. industry, commerce, education and politics), and that women who choose to remain within the 'private' sphere of the home do so purely for affective reasons. Through a process of education and advocacy, liberal feminists aim to change laws which discriminate against women and promote policies of affirmative action. They campaign for state funding of services such as abortion, women's refuges and childcare, and they challenge women's traditional role as volunteers, arguing that voluntary work is part of women's traditional patterns of dependence and self-sacrifice. The ideal for liberal feminists is the 'professionalisation' of traditionally unpaid work, which would increase the status of such work and give women greater fulfilment,. Ultimately, this would lead to the removal of gender divisions in

the home, so that men as well as women would be able to devote themselves to caring and nurturing work.

Characteristic of liberal approaches is the use of legislation to institute change. Cook (1983a) suggests that:

> Liberal feminism or what could be termed mainstream feminism, is one that has been enshrined in reports to Government on the situation of women, which have all called for better provision and quality of childcare services (1983a, p. 5).

The aims of such reports are to be achieved through new funding and administrative approaches, enshrined in legislation.

Childcare and Liberal Feminism in Aotearoa/New Zealand

The demand for childcare provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand increased markedly during the 1970s as increasing numbers of women sought to return to the workforce, not only for economic reasons, but in order to seek personal fulfilment. Liberal feminists, with their campaigns for the abolition of discriminatory laws and the desire for women to validate their life experience by participation in the public sphere, were particularly to the fore in the childcare debate. Liberal feminists saw women's childrearing role as a barrier to participation in the public sphere and were eager to expose the generally accepted need for full time mothering of young children as a myth which had been used to limit women's participation in society.

The liberal utopia was to be one in which women had equal access to life in the 'public sphere' of paid work, and the same chance as men to gain access to the power accorded to certain professions and institutions, irrespective of

biological differences. The autonomous self, a critical facet of liberalism, could not be fully realised, in liberal theory, without equality of opportunity in work and education. Wearing (1984) describes the liberal feminist solution to the conflict between motherhood and participation in the workforce as:

> .....includ[ing] changes in employment conditions as well as in the family so that parenting replaces motherhood and women can participate equally and on their own terms, (as far as values and emphases are concerned), with men in production and in social and political life (1984, p. 28).

Problems with the Liberal Feminist Analysis

Liberal feminists looked to childcare in the 1970s as a means of enabling women to participate in the public arena with more ease, and used arguments about the 'rights of women' to advocate the need for childcare services. Yet, as Chodorow (1978) argues, the achievement of support services for women's domestic work, such as childrearing, did not lead to a parallel decline in the domestic expectations placed upon them:

> Women have learned that fundamental changes in the social relations of production do not assure concomitant changes in the domestic relations of reproduction.....Organised childcare and schooling outside the home presuppose and supplement mothering within it. They do not supplant this mothering (1978, pp. 5 - 6).

At the heart of this conflict between mothering and paid work lies the determination of liberal theory to separate the realms of the public and the private. Within the liberal perspective, concessions are necessary at a practical level between men and women, *but no serious reappraisal of their roles is proposed*. Childcare services in the 1970s were seen as existing as an appendage to social change, not as constituting a central part of it; it was designed to meet the needs of a society which wished to reproduce its cultural

values without seriously challenging underlying assumptions about who had responsibility for the care and education of young children.

Legislative change to support women's re-entry into paid work, whilst no doubt useful and far-reaching, fails to confront the real issues surrounding women's participation in the public sphere. Cook (1983b) is cynical about the power of legislation to make real changes in the lives of women.

> Women have been naive to believe that tinkering with discriminatory laws could achieve equal status with men. For example, if men dominated early childhood education (E.C.E.) and women dominated the universities it would still be voluntarism, cake stalls, working bees, 'mother' helping, low wages.....versus quinquennial grants, paid sabbatical leave, $25,000 plus salaries.....etc., BUT in the reverse order (1983b, p. 14).

In looking to the state to provide better provision of childcare, liberal feminists appeared to contradict one of the basic tenets of liberal theory, that of reducing the involvement of the state in the private sphere. In doing so, however, they attempted to use the collective strength of women's electoral power to advance the cause of women, still a key feature of liberal feminism.

Jaggar (1983) identifies several other internal contradictions of liberal feminism, including the liberal disregard for manual work and the life of the body. Whilst 'male sciences' have come to dominate traditionally female spheres such as childrearing, women continue to carry out the *manual* tasks involved. In avoiding any challenge to the distinction between what is 'mental' and what is 'manual', liberal feminists, Jaggar argues, simply look for opportunities for women to *enter* the 'mental' sphere, rather than re-valuing what has become women's traditional work. Jaggar suggests that:

> Liberal feminist assumptions rest on a devaluation of women's traditional work and indeed of the labor of most working people. According to these assumptions, producing a book on childrearing earns more respect than producing a happy baby and research on nutrition is seen as a more valuable and fulfilling endeavour than preparing a meal (1983, p. 188).

This division of labour inevitably leads to the creation of a meritocracy, where those at the top are able to define 'merit' and limit rewards. Human efforts and values such as nurturance are considered to have *low* merit, reducing the work of the domestic sphere to low status and attracting poor pay.

The view of the 'mental' world which liberal feminism offered to middle class women in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1970s was to have a bitter consequence for the working class women who would carry out the domestic work which liberal feminists sought to cast aside. The new users of childcare services were middle class women enjoying new found economic independence and their circumstances contrasted sharply with the poor pay of childcare workers. Continuing demands for *low cost* childcare meant that childcare fees werekept low, but this was to be at the expense of childcare workers, whose wages remained extremely low.

In exposing the contradiction between the circumstances of these two groups of women, another difficulty of the liberal feminist analysis becomes apparent. Despite its demands for increasing the status of women in society, liberal feminism offers no analysis of the ways in which society exerts power over the lives of individuals, not just through the relegation of individuals to gender roles, but to roles according to race, class, age and ability. Whilst middle class women enjoyed the benefits of improved access to childcare, the working class women who provided it remained locked into poor pay and conditions.

Liberal feminist debates have tended to rely to a large extent on an understanding of the concept of 'role'. Liberal feminists during the 1970s, in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere, actively fostered debate concerning the concept of role, particularly as it related to traditional views about appropriate 'sex-roles' for women in society. Connell (1983) discusses the nature of role theory, which relies heavily upon the naming of roles (*positions*), usually based upon the actions which are being enacted (*prescriptions*). Positions can only exist, furthermore, in relation to the position of others (*counter-positions or role frames*) and to *their* expectations of the behaviour assigned to the role and sanctions which are placed upon the carrying out of particular roles. In this way, role theorists have argued, personality is formed, as individuals internalise the role(s) imposed upon them.

Connell debunks role theory by pointing out the deeply conservative nature of the concept of role and the total inability of role theory to deal with the resistance of individuals. Furthermore, he criticises role theory for its total absence of an analysis of social constructs, such as class and power, which exist *outside* the individual, yet restrict the positions which individuals might adopt.

Connell effectively links role theory to conservative forces in western capitalism by noting those eras during which role theory enjoyed prominence.

> [Interest in role theory] first arose at a time when western capitalism was facing economic and political crises, and a working-class revolt that embodied a profound crisis of legitimation.....[The] behavioural sciences responded by producing a sociology of occupational roles, a theory of their stratification, and a general sociology that attempted to show the functional necessity (for social survival) of role performance. The apogee of role theory in the 1950s corresponded to the triumph of conservative ideology in western social science at large.....Finally, when faced with a new legitimation crisis caused by the rise of sexual

> liberation movements, the behavioural sciences responded by developing a sociology of 'sex roles' and a descriptive account of supposed changes in their norms (1983, p. 204).

Liberal feminism, because of its attempts to redefine gender roles without regard for related concepts of race, class, age and ability, could only be limited in its success. By failing to adequately deal with these related issues, it overlooked the complexity of forces which shape the lives (and 'roles') of individuals and society.

Another notable omission from liberal feminist discourse however was an analysis of why childcare centres should be necessary in the first place. Firestone (1970) uses a radical feminist perspective to criticise childcare centres for the way in which they allow women to treat the 'symptom' (i.e. the need for childcare) without addressing the 'cause' (i.e. the inequality of gender relations in the care of children).

> Day care centres buy women off. They ease the immediate pressure without asking *why* the pressure is on women (1970, p. 193, my emphasis).

For middle-class feminists re-entering the public sphere, and earning enough to be able to afford childcare, this contradiction was side-stepped.

A second notable omission in liberal feminist arguments for childcare was an analysis of the position of those women who *provided* childcare services. Whilst many middle-class liberal feminists sought access to quality, affordable childcare, childcare workers remained part of the female underclass of poorly paid, exploited service workers; advocacy of their position was not a feature of liberal feminist debates during the 1970s. It would not be until the 1980s that

feminist efforts to publicise childcare services would have beneficial spin-offs for childcare workers.

Despite the shortcomings of the liberal femininst analysis however, there can be no doubt as to the major impact of liberal feminism in advancing the cause of childcare. Because childcare centres were viewed as a necessary adjunct to women's participation in the public sphere, liberal feminists worked hard to advocate and improve childcare provision and keep childcare to the forefront as a political issue.

Progress in Childcare Services in the 1970s

A proliferation of reports, conferences and working parties on childcare was to appear throughout the 1970s. Many of the recommendations to emerge from these documents were directly related to the place and status of working women in Aotearoa/New Zealand but, despite the demands of the feminist movement and the rapid growth in numbers of childcare centres, official recognition of the need for comprehensive and good quality childcare was slow to emerge.

The Hill Report

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Preschool Education 1971 (the Hill report) was a major exploration into the provision of early childhood facilities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and contained a number of recommendations for government action.

Although one of committee's main proposals was "that pre-school services, including full-time day care, should be steadily expanded so that they are available to all parents who want them", this was qualified by the statement that "development of the services should be based on the existing voluntary organisations working in a closer partnership with the Department of Education and with stronger professional and financial support from the Department" (Department of Education, 1972, p. 27). This second recommendation effectively advocated the expansion of kindergartens and Playcentre but held out little hope for the development of childcare services.

Care vs Education

The Hill report also questioned: "What should be the nature and extent of the Department of Education's responsibility for educational programmes in day care centres?" (ibid., p. 28). At this time the role of enforcing the 1960 childcare regulations was moving from the Department's Division of Child Welfare to the new Department of Social Welfare, strengthening the link between childcare and welfare services.

In a major research project which studied pre-school services in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Barney (1975) records the nature and extent of childcare provision in the early 1970s.

> [At] the end of 1973 there were 10,285 children attending 385 registered child care centres, 208 of which (54 percent) fell into the educational category and catered for 63 percent of the children attending, leaving 37 percent in the predominantly *care* units (1975, p. 124, author's emphasis).

Barney describes a rapid growth in childcare provision during the 1960s and early 1970s, an overall increase of 137.7 percent, with the majority of the growth occurring in the "care" sector. By 1973, day nurseries comprised 35 percent of all childcare centres, other categories included shopper's creches, private kindergartens and centres for the handicapped (ibid., pp. 124 - 125). Fees in these centres were considerably higher than those charged in private and community kindergartens, averaging $7.00 to $8.00 per week in larger centres (ibid., p. 129).[2] Barney's report identifies the burgeoning demand for full day care provision as increasing numbers of mothers of pre-school children sought work outside the home in the early 1970s. He also hints at the debate over the 'quality' of childcare centres which followed on the heels of concern about the care of young children for long periods outside the family home.

Issues of Quality

Chief issues of concern in the quality debate were the limited financial assistance available from government (assistance was only available through approved voluntary welfare organisations), the low level of staff qualifications in childcare centres (the Hill report had recommended that the childcare regulations be changed to require childcare centres caring for children over the age of 2 1/2 years to employ at least one staff member holding an approved educational qualification) and, overall, the lack of educationally stimulating programmes (Barney, 1975, p. 130).

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[2] This division between centres providing primarily "care" and those established for "educational" purposes was not a distinction employed by Barney,but merely reports the way in which centres were officially categorised at that time.

Barney identifies the reason for the dilemma in which parents and children found themselves in the mid 1970s when demanding quality provision.

> Two government departments have responsibilities for ensuring standards in childcare centres - Health, and.....the Department of Social Welfare. But neither appears to have regulations controlling the type or quality of programme offered..... should they discover a lack of affection, limited opportunities for adult-child contacts, rejection or even physical exclusion of children from the group, there appears to be very little they can do about it.....at the official level, the quality of the child care centre play programme appears to be the concern of no one who could take effective action against it (1975, p. 131).

Barney also identifies the issue of equality of provision with regard to childcare services and the need for "a range of types of pre-school within easy reach of young family homes.....rather than claiming that one type is *better* than another....." (ibid., p. 133, author's emphasis).

Women and Paid Employment

The report of the Select Committee on Women's Right in 1975 devoted an entire chapter to "Child Care". It identified the upsurge in demand for childcare in western countries and the gap between childcare demand and provision - 35-40,000 mothers of pre-schoolers were in paid work in New Zealand at the time of the Committee's report, versus 2781 places available in registered childcare centres (1975, p.87).

The report is a useful summary of social trends regarding childcare in the mid-1970s, at the height of the 'second wave' of feminist agitation in New Zealand. The report's authors advocate extensive government monitoring and assistance in childcare services, allowing women to participate in a full range of activities outside the home, including paid employment. The also identify poor levels of

staff training and wages as impediments to quality services, and recommended transfer of responsibility for childcare from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education.[3]

McDonald (1978) wrote strongly of the need to cut through the established rhetoric surrounding childcare services and address the realities of the demand for childcare from women and their families.

> It is astonishing to see how many separate groups in New Zealand are pressing for, or against, the provision of child care. The parties to the dispute include the established pre-school movements, the child care movement, the government departments of Health, Education and Welfare, women's groups of differing persuasions, employers, employee organisations, "experts" in child development and care, and men, political parties and "society at large" (1978, p. 71).

She also identifies those factors which have the greatest bearing on childcare provision.

> A falling birthrate.....results in subtle pressures on women to stay at home and bear children. ..... [Many] people believe that child care services would result in women going out to work and having smaller families. My own opinion is that.....women are likely to view bearing children more favourably if they can receive help with rearing them. The economy obviously has an effect on the money that governments are willing to set aside for early childhood services. It may also affect whether or not women need to work for economic reasons. The availability of work is yet another factor determining whether or not mothers are employed. The structure of the workforce and its division into paid and unpaid may alter. Our early childhood services depend to a considerable extent on voluntary labour drawn from women at home. Informal family day care, which is widespread, depends on women being at home. The principle of voluntarism may fade in favour of a market reward for work done (ibid., pp. 73 - 74).

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[3] A strong theme of the report was the need for revision of the 1960 Child Care Regulations (an event which was not to occur for ten years) and the transfer of the oversight of childcare services from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education would wait even longer; these time lags effectively summarise the way in which central government addressed recommendations concerning childcare both of this report, and those of the Hill Report three years earlier.

Dann (1985) describes the way feminists kept the childcare issue to the forefront of debates about women in the workforce during the 1970s.

> A major demand of the WLM [Women's Liberation Movement] in New Zealand was free twenty-four-hour child-care centres; free because child-care centres should provide enriching experiences for the child and be available to all sectors of society; and twenty-four-hour *not* so that children can be 'dumped' there indefinitely, as opponents asserted, but so that the children of parents who are ill or working shifts can be properly cared for.....
>
> Feminists kept raising the need for child-care centres whenever government invited their opinion.....and on plenty of occasions when it did not. The refusal of local or national government, and most employers, to take responsibility for the child-care needs of workers has not prevented mothers from taking up the jobs available - it has merely meant a proliferation of makeshift child-care arrangements. Efforts to provide cheaper forms of child-care, such as the Family Day Care scheme, have been criticised by feminists who see this system as a makeshift second best to pre-schools run by properly trained and paid staff. Proper provision of child-care remains unfinished business for the WLM (1985, pp. 69 - 71).

Both Dann and McDonald begin to signal an important shift in feminist perspectives on childcare during the 1970s. As the Women's Liberation Movement began to grapple with its own internal complexities, feminists began to confront the challenge to arguments for childcare which Firestone had posed in 1970: not whether childcare services were necessary, but why did society construct gender relations in such a way as to *make* childcare centres necessary; feminist arguments for a complete reappraisal of the relations upon which society was based were beginning to take other factors, aside from gender, into account. In particular, socialist feminists were beginning to formulate a more complex set of theories about women's place in society and, within this, a new view of the place of childcare services.

The Basis of Socialist Feminism

In developing a theory of women and society, socialist feminists have drawn primarily upon the concepts central to traditional Marxism. Chief amongst these is the concept of *alienation* as it applies to individuals and groups within society. Marxists view individuals, in particular wage labourers, as alienated from each other, from society and from the non-human world by the dictates of capitalism, which deprives workers of control over their own labour-power and removes their products from them. At the same time, waged work forces individuals to over-develop a limited range of their capacities, thereby limiting their potential for developing other and more complex abilities.

Socialist feminists have enlarged upon this concept to include *sexual alienation* as a central force in dictating women's place in society. Women are seen as defined most closely by their gender-related roles, chiefly as mothers, childrearers and providers of male sexual gratification. Central to socialist feminist theory is the argument that such roles are not 'natural' or 'instinctive' but rather socially defined and, therefore, open to change. Socialist feminists also argue that increasing scientific (i.e. male) control over the processes of childbirth and childrearing parallel workers' experiences of the loss of control over their own production which has occurred under capitalism, providing the essence of their alienation.

One of the challenges of socialist feminism, particularly in relation to Marxist and liberal feminist analyses, is its attempt to synthesise the whole network of oppressive forces generated by the interests of capital. Writers such as

Eisenstein (1979) have done much to link the key concepts of capitalism and patriarchy, and increasingly socialist feminists have sought to link these forces with those of racism, ageism and the oppression of people of differing abilities. This makes for a complex theoretical framework, but one which rests on trying to identify and overthrow the *underlying* cause of all these oppressions and attempting to describe an alternative society.

In order to describe a society in which all people may reach their full potential, socialist feminists seek to completely re-order society's understanding of what is worthwhile and to re-define society's understanding of *power*. Jaggar (1983) describes this as an 'alternative consciousness'.

> [An] effective revolutionary strategy must include techniques for demystifying the prevailing male-dominant and capitalist ideology and for developing alternative forms of consciousness, that is alternative ways of perceiving reality and alternative attitudes toward it.
>
> A vital part of organizing for social change is the creation of a sense of political unity among oppressed groups (1983, p. 333).

This implies the creation of entirely different organisations upon which to base society, institutions which are generated by the community and remain within its control. This would apply not only to the major institutions upon which society is based, such as the state, but to the day-to-day politics of the family (and even as far as prevailing social beliefs about what it means to be a 'child', a 'man', or 'elderly'). Socialist feminists view the nuclear family as having arisen in response to the combined forces of capitalism and patriarchy and therefore comprising a key factor in women's oppression so alternatives to it must be sought.

A complete re-think of how power is defined is essential to socialist feminism. Power in a capitalist patriarchy is seen by socialist feminists to be defined as domination and oppression, whereas in an ideal society power would be conceptualised as a liberating force. Groups and individuals would be given responsibility for their own outcomes and society as a whole would benefit by sharing in their accomplishments. Power would be re-defined as energy and initiative.

Feminisation and Alienation

Jaggar (1983) argues that the creation of rigidly gender-related roles by capitalist society has hinged upon the concept of 'femininity'. By conforming to gender-related definitions of men as active, intellectual and inexpressive and women as passive, intuitive and submissive, men and women have become alienated from each other and, in this way, both men and women have been restricted in the development of their capacities. A central demand of socialist feminism is the abolition of rigid gender-related roles and the development of a new politics of power-sharing. Jaggar summarises the link between women's oppression as defined by socialist feminism and the Marxist analysis of capitalism thus:

> [Use] of the theoretical framework of alienation identifies women's contemporary oppression as a phenomenon peculiar to the capitalist form of male dominance. The apparent universality of women's subordination is revealed as taking a form that is historically specific. The framework of alienation, moreover, links women's oppression in the home with women's and men's experience in wage labor.....Properly understood, ... it may provide a guide for determining how that oppression may be eliminated.....The alienation of contemporary women is a historically specific product of the capitalist mode of production. It results from such historically specific features of capitalism as the fetishism of commodities, the rise of positive science, and especially the separation of home from workplace,

> accompanied by the characteristic split between emotion and reason, the personal and the political (1983, p. 317).

In order to replace capitalist values in relation to production, socialist feminists call for a new definition of products and productivity, whereby domestic labour, such as childrearing, is valued along with the 'goods and services' which are currently produced in the public sphere. Childrearing furthermore would no longer be considered exclusively a private, and therefore female domain, but a collective responsibility, shared by women, men and the community as a whole, with the community having a say in issues of reproductive freedom. This would not only liberate women to develop their capacities in other areas, but allow men to rediscover their emotional and nurturant potential.

As well as articulating a new vision of sexual relations, socialist feminists have attempted to describe those forces which hinder progress towards such goals.

> Rather than focusing on ..... involving men immediately in childrearing, some socialist feminists argue that it is more important to alter the external social structures that channel women into motherhood and childrearing. The most important single factor contributing to this channeling is probably the sex-segregated job market, which keeps women in low-paid and low-status jobs. In these circumstances, childrearing appears to many women to be the only kind of fulfilling work available to them (Jaggar, 1983, p. 321).

Whilst the provision of community-provided childcare is a central demand of socialist feminism, ironically childcare is an ideal example of the type of labour which socialist feminists have identified as essentially 'feminine', requiring characteristics of tolerance, communication, nurturance and patience. Childcare has also been characterised, along with nursing, as essentially 'manual' in its demands and reliant upon emotional and moral qualities, rather than 'mental' or intellectual capacities; an appreciation of this division is central

to an understanding of the concept of alienation. Throughout care and education services generally, the workforce is most characterised by its gender division, with women mainly working with the very young, where physical care and nurturance are seen as most essential.

'Feminisation' and Women's Paid and Unpaid Work

Craig (1991) summarises a number of studies into women's unpaid work which conclude that women who engage in unpaid caring labour experience a sense of personal worth as a result; she suggests further that such work also plays an important role in the construction of the feminine identity. Craig argues that this sense of self-worth arises from women's incorporation into the *cult of domesticity* which other authors have described as a characteristic feature of colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand, and which is referred to in Chapter one as the 'cult of mothering'. Within this set of beliefs, domesticity and motherhood were defined as the women's sphere, forming a site apart from the outside world where women could find fulfilment. This led to a rigid division of sexual labour in the colony, with women seen as innately nurturant and maternal, and was supported by key pieces of legislation which vested responsibility for the public sphere in the hands of men. As a consequence of this, Craig argues, women were encouraged to pursue employment of the type associated with the private sphere and girls were expected to train for such work whilst at school, under the guise of 'domestic science'.

Socialist feminists identify the way in which the 'feminisation' of key sectors of the workforce has had major implications for the way in which the interests of capital have been able to exploit women wage earners, chiefly through low pay

and fragmented industrial organisation. Women workers, clerical and childcare workers being two prime examples in Aotearoa/New Zealand, have traditionally been isolated, poorly paid, and poorly organised into unions. Childcare workers in particular have suffered from the conceptualisation of their work as 'feminine' and therefore anathema to union affiliation and agitation, which have been traditionally been viewed as masculine pursuits, even within the union movement itself.

Socialist feminists would argue that women's experience of paid work highlights the conflict between the spheres of public (paid) and private (unpaid) work. In seeking economic independence for women, many socialist feminists have advocated a system of domestic wages, whereby men and women who choose to engage in traditionally unpaid work, such as the care of young children and the elderly, receive a realistic wage in recognition of their domestic labour.

Socialist Feminism and Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Although it was argued earlier in this chapter that liberal feminism was an important force in the growth of the childcare movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1970s, socialist feminist concerns were also evident. Cook (1983a) argues that childcare itself was essentially a 'political' movement, by challenging values about how mothers should care for their children, allowing women to enter the workforce, and potentially upsetting power relations within the home, three essentially socialist feminist concerns.

> Any transformation in relationships demands not only a consciousness of the power relationships surrounding the macro institutions of society, but that the 'private' world within family and home also be discovered as political. These micro level relationships within the home, although autonomous in many ways, are also part of a total social system and are ultimately tied into the wider economic and political arrangements (1983a, p. 4).

Cook summarises the goals of socialists feminism in relation to childcare thus:

> At a practical level there is an emphasis on new and interchangeable socialization patterns for men and women; a sharing of childcare responsibilities between men, women and childcare services. Similarly there are schemes promoting job sharing and flexible working hours as a requirement from industry etc. (ibid., p. 5).

Although socialist feminist perspectives on childcare were beginning to develop during the late 1970s, it would not be until the late 1980s that their influence would become evident in feminist, and indeed government, approaches to childcare provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Slow Progress

In 1978, a conference on the provision of early childhood care and education facilities in New Zealand was convened by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (O.E.C.D.), and from it an Advisory Committee was established to continue the work begun by the conference, including an examination of childcare staff training needs.

Yet despite the string of reports and recommendations throughout the 1970s, the situation for childcare concerning official recognition and support remained little changed by the end of the decade. Although the number of centres had expanded greatly and the issue of childcare was being kept before politicians

and the public, regulations were still unchanged, workers continued to be non-unionised and debates over the appropriateness of extra-familial care remained.

The situation at the end of the 1970s is best summarised by Julian (1979) in an article entitled "Child Care: What Have We Achieved?" Julian records limited progress in fees support for needy families from the Department of Social Welfare, the lack of training opportunities for workers, the lack of recognition of childcare facilities by the Department of Education and the decline in the trend to open new centres; "from December 1975 to July 1977 70 new centres had opened - but 74 had closed" (1979, p. 105). Although she describes a large number of studies and action projects undertaken since 1975 in the area of childcare, Julian also points out Waring's 1977 argument that the area of childcare was one in which there had been least progress since the recommendation of the report of the Select Committee on Women's Rights in 1975.

In summary, by the early 1980s the number of childcare centres in Aotearoa/New Zealand had markedly increased from their early days. However, there was no overall co-ordinating body and planning was still poor, even non-existent. Provision remained sporadic and inadequate and the majority of young children in extra-familial care were not in registered childcare centres. Despite numerous reports recommending improved wages and, in particular, training for workers, staff were still mainly untrained and poorly paid (Smith & Swain, 1988). The childcare workforce was, as in the past, overwhelmingly female and frequently voluntary. Regulations governing standards were limited and mainly concerned with the physical environment of centres and many centres offered very limited programmes. Government

funding was limited to means-tested subsidies, and childcare fees were beyond the means of many families, particularly those with single parents (Gardiner, 1984, cited in Smith & Swain, 1988). Licensing regulations still allowed anyone, including private interests, to establish centres without requiring trained staff to be employed. Nor was there any provision for minimum working conditions or rates of pay. Government accountability for childcare services remained a matter for the Department of Social Welfare, reinforcing the myth of childcare being mainly concerned with the custodial care of children; kindergarten and Playcentre were where pre-school 'education' was assumed (and *supposed*) to take place.

What About the Workers?

Up until 1980, childcare workers seem to have been rendered invisible in the history of early childhood provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Reports and recommendations concerning early childhood services had made reference to the importance of staff training but only in as much as it was supposed to enhance the quality of the service to children; there was no suggestion of a link between staff training and any kind of career enhancement for women working in centres.

We know something of the early proponents of childcare and, more recently, about the women who use it. We now also know a great deal about children in care and the many positive effects on children and families of early childhood care and education. We know next to nothing, however, about the thousands of hours, both voluntary and paid, worked by women in childcare centres prior to 1980, and even less about women providing family day care. Despite the

plethora of committees and reports since World War II to study early childhood services, all recommending improvements in staffing, very little attention was paid to workers themselves.

Why did this occur? The most obvious answer is that childcare workers were not organised industrially. Without a union, they had no unified voice to express their concerns and, most importantly, to struggle for improvements in their conditions of work.

During the 1980s, childcare workers were to finally mobilise and the effects of childcare's association with the feminist movement during the 1970s would be felt. At the end of the 1970s however, childcare provision remained sporadic and was still characterised by its separation from 'educational' pre-schools such as kindergartens. This continuing problem of status had not been successfully addressed by the Women's Liberation Movement, nor had the situation of childcare workers been an important part of feminist analysis during the 1970s, despite rapid progress in the movement of women into the public sphere, prompted by the feminist resurgence.

Chapter three

The current context

The enormous changes experienced in the childcare sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the decade from 1980 to 1991 are discussed in this chapter. Three areas in particular which have contributed to these changes are described here: the establishment of the Early Childhood Workers' Union (E.C.W.U.); the development of training opportunities for workers in childcare; and funding initiatives on the part of the fourth Labour government. It is significant that these developments have occurred *despite* a time of turbulent economic and political change and some reasons for this are presented here. This chapter, of necessity, makes reference to the prevailing political ideology of the time, that of neo-liberalism, with its characteristic emphasis on individual 'rights' and 'responsibilities'. This resurgence in right-wing economic theory has signalled a marked trend away from the pattern of state intervention and welfare provision which had been part of the social climate of Aotearoa/New Zealand since the 1800s. This trend has had important consequences for childcare and appears set to continue to do so at least in the near future.

Davies (1984) highlights the divisions within society in Aotearoa/New Zealand over women's issues at the beginning of the 1980s in her description of the battle over the Working Women's Charter. The Charter, which had become part of trade union policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand, advocated women's access to services such as childcare, abortion, and flexible working hours, but it drew strong opposition from conservative elements.

> Pamphlets were produced and widely circulated claiming that the Charter was a Communist document.....that it recommended the dumping of children in child care for 24 hours a day like "battery hens" and that abortion would escalate and family life be destroyed (1984, p. 302).

Despite the recommendations of several reports concerned with childcare during the 1970s, childcare in the early 1980s still remained under the control of the Department of Social Welfare (established by the Labour government in 1972), reinforcing its stigmatisation as a 'welfare' service. The Department was responsible for monitoring childcare centres under the 1960 Childcare Regulations, which laid down the criteria for the employment of childcare workers, specifying that they be at least 17 years of age and in good physical health. The Department was responsible, under the legislation, for the licensing of childcare centres and centres were awarded either an 'A' or a 'B' licence according to whether any of the staff were trained. Recognised qualifications, for the purposes of licensing, included Karitane nursing, a Trained Teachers' Certificate (Primary) and the Certificate of the Royal Society of Health.

Childcare Training

From 1969 onwards, the New Zealand Childcare Association had arranged for workers in childcare centres to complete the requirements for the Royal Society of Health's Certificate in Childcare. This scheme was administered from Great Britain via the Childcare Association and written assignments were sent to Great Britain to be marked.

The next advance in childcare training in Aotearoa/New Zealand was the establishment of a one-year full-time course in childcare at Wellington Polytechnic. Cook (1985) argues that:

> This course brought a new 'breed' of childcare worker into the industry: they emerged with a strong commitment to the idea of childcare as a career and many [became] stalwarts of the E.C.W.U. (1985, p. 49).

From 1978 the New Zealand Childcare Association had taken over responsibility for its own field-based training and established what has now become the largest single training scheme for childcare workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In 1985, a joint ministerial working party had reported on the transfer of childcare administration from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. One of the recommendations of this report was the establishment of a working party on childcare training. This working party was duly convened and reported in late 1986. Some teachers colleges had already established one-year full-time courses for childcare by this time and chief among the recommendations of the working party was the establishment of pre-service training for childcare in all teachers colleges from 1988 onwards. Stemming from this recommendation three-year full-time courses of integrated early childhood training were established in all six colleges by 1990.

The Early Childhood Workers' Union

As early as 1976, Sonja Davies had floated the idea of an industrial union for childcare workers and in 1979 she toured Aotearoa/New Zealand with Ros Noonan, then secretary of the Kindergarten Teachers' Association, to promote the idea of a union.

The New Zealand Kindergarten Teachers' Association (N.Z.K.T.A.) had been established in 1952 as a professional organisation and was formally recognised as a service organisation in 1958, when kindergarten teachers made their first salary claim. By the mid-1980s the union had become a well-politicised force, calling its first half-day stopwork in 1985. Such action, however, had been advocated by the union as early as 1975; Clark *et al.* (1983) argue that members of the union had become politicised by the women's movement during the 1970s.

With the support of N.Z.K.T.A., the Early Childhood Workers' Union (E.C.W.U.) was registered in March 1982. Clark *et al.* suggest that the "collective consciousness of childcare workers was slower to emerge than that of their counterparts in the kindergarten service" (1983, p. 17) due to a number of factors, including the lack of common bonds between workers, including dissimilar training backgrounds, the lack of formal links between childcare centres, and the close relationships between childcare workers and parents.

> [Although] childcare workers may feel the injustice of their working conditions, their close relationships with the parents.....makes it difficult to express this frustration, because higher pay means higher fees for the parents. The fact is that most childcare workers have felt more akin to the parents.....than to their fellow childcare workers.....The conflict has thus remained submerged and the issues have not been perceived as a collective reality or a collective oppression (ibid., p. 17).

The isolation and fragmentation of childcare work sites also hindered the development of an awareness of industry-wide concerns.

> Collectively childcare workers are amongst the lowest paid workers in New Zealand, but childcare workers have only experienced this oppression as an individual problem stemming from the difficulty of the parents or the employer at the workplace. Such fragmentation has privatised and trivialised what are common issues (ibid.).

The establishment of the union was not greeted with enthusiasm in all quarters. Many employers felt financially threatened and objected to the 'political' image which unionisation gave to childcare workers. With the assistance of the Employers' Federation, several employers grouped together to frustrate the establishment of a national award for childcare workers. Some workers too felt threatened by the image of unionisation. Cook (1985) states that "although acknowledging their under-paid status, workers did not want trouble, and for many, the union was seen as remote and not relevant to them" (p. 51).

Unlike the N.Z.K.T.A. which represented a group of workers within the state sector, the E.C.W.U. was a private sector union whose members came from a wide variety of training backgrounds and were employed by a multitude of different employers, from individuals to large charitable trusts. At the same time as the union was established, the National government placed a wage-price freeze on the New Zealand economy and the fledging union found itself entering the freeze without an established award to fall back on. Despite this,

the union engaged in a fierce battle against the Employers' Federation to gain an exemption from the freeze and in 1984 an award, minus clauses specifying rates of pay, was drawn up.

In 1984, with the election of the fourth Labour government, the wage-price freeze was lifted and compulsory unionism re-established, boosting the union's resources. In April 1985 the first award wages were registered, with 34 centres covered by the award. By June 1986 a national award for childcare workers was in place. Despite the emergence of a national award, wage rates were still low and other awards emerged to provide conditions above the national award. These were the regional Otago/Southland award, the Universities Determination, covering staff of some University creches, and the Consenting Parties Award, which was instigated by a group of concerned employers.

In 1990, due to the combined influences of the development of integrated three-year early childhood training, increasing recognition of shared concerns, and legislation forcing the termination or amalgamation of small trade unions, the E.C.W.U. and N.Z.K.T.A. combined to form the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa (C.E.C.U.A.), representing childcare workers, kindergarten teachers, home-based carers and nannys, and other early childhood professionals who chose to affiliate with a comprehensive early childhood union.

The Neo-liberal Context

Such significant and rapid development in the status and training of childcare workers seem extraordinary within the economic context of the decade 1980 to 1991 in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Powerful influences sought to keep childcare

off the government agenda; writers such as Lauder (1987), Lauder, *et al.* (1988) and Nuttall (1990) refer to the prevailing monetarist, or 'New Right' agenda guiding the economic decision-making of New Zealand governments during the 1980s, and the ways in which neo-liberal ideology influenced government policies on women and children. These policies have been most apparent in statements made by the New Zealand Treasury in its recommendations to government concerning pre-school education.

The Basis of Neo-liberal Economics

Briefly stated, neo-liberal economics is based on a view of society as composed of essentially self-interested individuals who express this self-interest by the accumulation of personal spending power. This pursuit is best facilitated within an active capitalist economy, based on competition and economic 'survival of the fittest'. This requires the commodification of the labour of all groups of workers, the removal of state influences on the market, extensive privatisation (i.e. reduction in the size of the state) and individual responsibility (Lauder, 1987).

Neo-liberalism and Early Childhood Services

An analysis of *Government Management: Brief to the Incoming Government, Volume II, Education Issues*, published by the New Zealand Treasury subsequent to the 1987 general election, reveals the neo-liberal agenda clearly at work in Treasury recommendations on pre-school education. The care and education of young children is seen primarily as the responsibility of individual families, whilst early childhood services can only "enhance" the desirable

human qualities most properly acquired in the home (Treasury, 1987, p. 47). More powerfully, Treasury assert that early childhood care and education (E.C.E.) is primarily used by parents for its custodial function, and in doing so parents will overlook the needs of the child.

> The trade-off between benefit to the child and to the parents is natural and inevitable. However, some parents will 'fail' as parents, not in that they make a trade-off, but in that they unduly weight their own interests against those of the child (ibid., p. 54).

E.C.E. is not seen as benefiting society as a whole, but mainly individuals, particularly the child's primary caregiver; it is viewed as a private, rather than a public, good.

> Society will benefit from self-socialised individuals, who will eventually contribute socially and economically to the community at large. In practice, however, these costs and benefits will largely accrue to the individuals concerned in terms of the psychic income from better social interactions and status and material income from better paid jobs. Thus, to the extent that formal ECS contributes to these advantages, it contributes all or most of those advantages to the individual child (ibid.).

State intervention in domestic circumstances, such as the care of the very young, is a 'no go' area, not only because it undermines the 'proper' role of parents, but because the economic cost is very high in proportion to the chance of successfully improving the performance of parents whose childrearing skills are poor (ibid., p. 55).

A final area in which Treasury reveals its neo-liberal bias is in its attack on 'professionalisation' of the E.C.E. workforce. They attempt to argue that neither the pre-service training of teachers, nor the curricula provided by such trained teachers, are linked to positive outcomes for children, and that direct parental participation is the key factor in good quality programmes; they go so

far as to argue that training for E.C.E workers will work *against* parental contact.

> It would be unfortunate if the increasing 'professionalism' amongst ECS staff.....promoted the attitude that expert child-care can only be carried out by highly qualified professionals (ibid., p. 57).

Concerns surrounding the "increasing 'professionalism'" of E.C.E staff are linked to Treasury's belief that early childhood services are subject to middle-class capture. The relationship between socio-economic status (and ethnic group) and attendance at pre-school, well researched in New Zealand, is highlighted by Treasury. For example, Ferguson's 1984 study of this relationship is summarised as revealing that "the way in which current pre-school services operate is to produce an upward allocation of economic resources away from the socially disadvantaged child" (Treasury, 1987, p.69). The Treasury solution to this however is not to make more services available to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, but to ensure a Robin Hood-style reallocation of resources, by removing funding from the 'haves' and giving it to the 'have-nots'. This is introduced under the guise of "targeting".

> Equity concerns would have suggested a high degree of targeting in assistance - yet there appears in practice to have been very little. The ineluctable tendency for the middle classes to capture the agenda and the dollars in any broadly based government programme would seem to apply to the ECS sector as much as in any other (ibid., p. 72).

Treasury arguments would seem to advocate low-cost parent (i.e. mother) oriented options such as Playcentre and home-based daycare, which rely on minimal state intervention. The government's role is seen as providing and monitoring regulations to set minimum standards and only to intervene in domestic circumstances as an agent of last resort. E.C.E. is viewed primarily

as a *private* good and the cost of its provision should therefore be met by private means, rather than by state funding.

Lauder *et al.* (1988) summarise the Treasury analysis in this way:

> Overall, the Treasury position amounts to this: women's unpaid work in the faily is an essential part of the educative process and social system. Women with children, who also wish to do paid work endanger their children's well being. Child rearing is a private activity which state intervention can jeopardise if the provision of alternatives encourages women, like men, to enter the labour market (pp. 23 - 24).

By arguing that society overall does not generally benefit from E.C.E., the case for government support of centres and, in particular of childcare workers' wages and training, is seen to be weakened.

The Growth of the 'Status' of Childcare

How, then, was it possible for childcare, invisible for so long, to have experienced such progress in status throughout the 1980s, given the prevailing economic ideology which sought to foil the interests of women and children?

Unionisation and the growth of childcare training certainly combined to markedly raise the status of childcare, both as a service and as a source of employment (status, in this context, being generally defined not only as working conditions and rates of pay in comparison to other professions, but the esteem in which society generally holds a type of work or groups of workers). Smith and Swain (1988) identify several additional factors influencing improvements in the status of childcare work during the 1980s, including the association of childcare with articulate, middle-class women involved in the women's movement, the decline in support for maternal deprivation theory,

acceptance by other early childhood professionals, good publicity and media attention, and the gradual increase in the number of trained people in childcare who were able to articulate the importance of good training and the demands of the job (pp. 146 - 147).

A further catalyst in improving the status of childcare services was undoubtedly the transfer, in 1986, of government administration of childcare services from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. The joint ministerial working party which had reported on this transition of the administrative services in 1985 had made a comprehensive set of recommendations, including recommendations covering staffing and training in childcare centres, improved pay and working conditions for childcare staff and centre programmes which would reflect high standards of quality. Many of these themes were to recur later in the 1980s as the government once again reviewed the delivery of early childhood services in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Fourth Labour Government

The fourth Labour government was elected in 1984 on a strong platform of reform in social policy areas. This coincided with the growth of the Early Childhood Workers Union and increasing politicisation within N.Z.K.T.A. May (1990) suggests that early childhood was caught up in the widespread restructuring of state institutions which was affecting the education sector and that early childhood interests were quick to grasp the opportunities resulting from this redesigning of Aotearoa/New Zealand's educational system.

A hugely significant step forward for childcare certainly came with the release of the Labour government's position paper on early childhood care and education in late 1988. Entitled *Before Five* the document outlined a comprehensive reform of early childhood care and education, to include markedly increased funding to early childhood services in exchange for the development of written charters, strengthening of early childhood training requirements, the establishment of a new support agency for early childhood services, and a complete re-write of the 1985 regulations applying to childcare (which had been amended only slightly with the transfer to the Department of Education, to require one trained staff member per centre). All of the recommendations of the Working Party on Early Childhood Care and Education, which released its report *Education to Be More* in December 1988, were taken up by the government, with the exception of a requirement for Boards of Trustees to be established for childcare centres, similar to those governing schools.

But as Meade (1990) and May (1990) both argue, reform in early childhood was not just due to far-sighted policy makers. May identifies a pattern of 'reform under Labour, consolidation under National' which has characterised progress for early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand, but also points out that reform has always come late on the heels of active lobbying by women.

> Demand for early childhood services has.....been linked with the changing role of women within the family, the workforce and public life. Historically during the postwar year, it has been during the term of each Labour Government that significant early childhood policy reflecting such changes has been initiated. The reader should not, however, get the impression that Labour Governments have been eager and waiting to initiate new directions. Each policy shift has been the result of long hard-fought campaigns by women who with persistence, skilful lobbying and packaging have had more success persuading Labour Party policy makers than the National Party to accommodate and support the new realities of life for women and children.

> Politicians from both parties have always been slow to meet the real needs and demands for early childhood services (1990, p. 4).

These "real needs and demands" have overwhelmingly been to do with quality and accessibility, two issues thoroughly addressed by *Education to Be More*. Subsequent to the release of *Before Five*, early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand had experienced a rapid set of changes in funding and administration. These changes were not always implemented smoothly (May, 1990; Nuttall, 1990) but they were designed with issues of quality and accessibility at their core.

The Socialist Feminist Agenda for Childcare

An analysis of *Education to Be More* suggests that a strong socialist feminist agenda was another key factor at work in the development and implementation of progressive childcare policy against prevailing economic trends in the social services (Nuttall, 1990). The report suggests that the extra-familial care and education of young children should be seen as an integral and natural part of a modern society and that society as a whole should accept responsibility for the care and education of young children.

> An adequate level of early childhood care and education is necessary for the rights of children to be provided for, and for the continuation of a healthy society. This means that all members of society, whether or not they have children, have an interests in ensuring that early childhood care and education is provided in a way which maximises the interests of children, as well as those of society (Meade, 1988, p. 20).

The report also identifies the predominance of women in the early childhood workforce as a factor in its low status, with consequent low wages, and endorses the increased professionalisation of those who work with young

children; such arguments were clearly opposite to those being put forward by Treasury.

Meade (1990) and Wells (1991) both comment on the way that this growth in acceptance of childcare was *against* prevailing social and economic trends. Meade argues that the presence of key figures in influential positions, in combination with a consistently vocal childcare lobby, has been the reason for the growth of political support for childcare despite a recessionary economy.

> To achieve policy of benefit to women, the participants take on added significance. There must be people, preferably women, committed to advancing the interests of women in a variety of critical places for 'significant movement' to happen. The momentum produced by their joint efforts can, at times, compensate for the unequal amount of power held by women when trying to advocate for women (and children). Furthermore, such a coalition can be most effective when policy proposals have been advocated for quite a long time. (Early childhood educators had been developing theirs for years.) (Meade, 1990, p. 14.)

The Campaign for Quality Early Childhood Education, organised by C.E.C.U.A. was an enormously widespread and successful effort to lobby of Members of Parliament. It's success reflected the effective networks created by the union amongst a relatively powerless group of workers, supported by the parents of children in centres. The enormous boost to funding for early childhood centres which resulted from the adoption of the recommendations of *Education to Be More* had three priority targets: enhancement of the quality of programmes provided by centres, improvements in the pay, training and status of early childhood practitioners, and the reduction of the fees which centres charged to parents. That the Consenting Parties Award was renegotiated to provide an overall 38% increase in its wage schedule, phased in over the first twelve months of the new funding, is one example of the impact for childcare workers of improved state funding to childcare.

1990 and Into the Future

Much research remains to be done to document the impact of the reform of early childhood administration instigated by Labour. That which has been done to date (e.g. Farquhar, 1991) suggests that, whilst the period of change was extremely stressful, the outcomes have been positive.

Into the 1990s, however, it appears that many of the hard won advances gained during the 1980s are under threat. The current National government, elected in November of 1990, entitled its early childhood policy "Parents as First Teachers". This has subsequently emerged as a home-based child monitoring and parent education scheme along the lines of the work of the Plunket Society (which has, in fact, won the contract to trial the scheme). At the same time, funding to early childhood services has suffered a number of blows. In particular, a major reduction in funding for the care of under-twos was announced in the 1991 Budget, giving rise to concerns that centres will respond to this reduced funding by raising fees to parents, reducing staff numbers, or both. None of these scenarios augurs well for continued improvements in the pay and working conditions of childcare workers.

The 1980s were undoubtedly the most exciting period in childcare history in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Enormous advances were made in the unionisation of workers, staff training, quality programmes, state funding, staff pay and working conditions, monitoring and regulation, accountability and the professionalisation of childcare staff. That these advances, so dependant on state financial support, occurred during a period of intense privatisation of state

assets and reduction in government spending is incredible, particularly in light of the advice being given to government by the Treasury, and reflects the intense efforts of childcare workers and advocates in lobbying politicians and policy makers.

It now appears that these same workers and advocates, having achieved the goals aimed at for so long, may have to begin their struggle anew to ensure continued state support for early childhood services.

Chapter four

Method

The focus of this study is on the relationship between the management structure of the centres in which childcare workers are employed and their work experiences, and how any differences or similarities which are revealed might be explained in an historical and/or theoretical context. In order to gain information about these experiences a written survey of the staff in a number of Christchurch childcare centres was conducted and a further groups of women, some of whom had responded to the survey were interviewed. The survey was developed initially by framing questions based on the two research questions on which this thesis is based:

1. To what extent, if any, are workers in privately owned childcare centres subject to poorer conditions of service than their counterparts in centres with other types of management structure?

2. In what way(s), if any, do the experiences of childcare workers differ, specifically in relation to their experience of the management structures of the centres in which they have worked, according to whether the centre is, or is not, privately owned?

The staff of one Christchurch centre were approached and agreed to pilot a draft survey. They gave feedback on the questions (according to clarity, flow and whether the questions prompted useful responses) and the instructions given for

the survey (according to whether they were clear and proved workable). As a result of this pilot, the survey was partially changed. The regional organiser of the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa (C.E.C.U.A.) was also approached and made useful suggestions for additional questions. The resulting survey is attached (*Appendix A*).

The CECUA organiser also assisted with the choice of centres to be surveyed. She was provided with the following criteria and made a number of suggestions about centres which might be approached according each category of centre identified:

1. A maximum of six centres would be surveyed. Three were to be privately owned and managed; the other three were to be non-profit making centres.

2. In each group of three, one centre was to be one where, in her professional opinion, staff enjoyed relatively good conditions of service and where staff morale was high; the second centre was to be one where relatively typical working conditions existed and/or staff were reasonably satisfied; the third centre was to be one where staff were subject to poor conditions of work and low staff morale.

Conditions of work were defined as not only including rates of pay but also physical work environments, ratios of staff to children and the quality of the relationship she perceived as existing between employer and staff.[4]

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[4] Interestingly, it did not prove difficult to identify private centres and a non-profit centres which could be considered 'typical'; it did prove difficult however to identify a private centre where overall working conditions were much above average and a non-profit centre where conditions were very poor.

The advantage of identifying centres in this way was that my advisor was in the position of having regular contact with staff in all Christchurch childcare centres, particularly those experiencing industrial strife of some description. She also had a thorough working knowledge of relative rates of pay and conditions across centres and those factors affecting staff morale which regularly came to her notice in her role as advocate and advisor to childcare workers throughout the South Island.

The supervisors of the six centres identified were initially approached by letter (*Appendix B*) and asked whether staff would be prepared to participate in the written survey individually and in their own time. Of those centres, all three non-profit centres responded favourably as did one privately owned centre. The private centres which did not wish to take part declined, in one case due to lack of interest by staff accompanied by advice to re-direct the request to the employer who would decide whether the staff should take part; this advice was declined due to the concern that the possibility of the employer having the opportunity to view the completed surveys might compromise staff responses. In the case of the second centre, it proved impossible to receive any response to the letter. Messages for the supervisor were left at the centre by telephone and a staff member eventually replied that all the mail went to the owner and that the owner was not usually very prompt in attending to such matters.

As a result of these unsuccessful approaches, a fourth private centre was approached. Having received confirmation from the supervisor that staff would respond to the survey, these were duly posted to the centre. Some time later, having received no responses, the supervisor was telephoned and asked if the

surveys had been received; they had not. It later transpired that the owner of the centre had intercepted the package (which had been personally addressed to the supervisor) and opened it. Having read the survey the owner subsequently forbade staff to reply to it. In addition to this, it appears that the centre owner also approached at least one other owner of a privately-owned centre and described the survey; no approach had been made to the staff of this subsequent centre. However, a short while later a staff member in this second centre received a letter which the owner of the centre mistakenly assumed to be a copy of the survey and subjected the staff member concerned to considerable intimidation, with reference to the survey.[5]

As a result of these incidents, the decision was made to approach no further private centres, since the possibility of harm to the job security of staff appeared to be a realistic threat. The staff of the fourth private centre approached, having originally agreed to complete the survey, were now no longer prepared to do so, despite assurances that their responses would be treated with complete confidentiality and that they could receive and complete the surveys at home, in their own time. Having been threatened by their employer they were not prepared to risk completing the surveys.

The surveys were sent by mail to the participating centres, including instructions for their completion (*Appendix C*). The surveys were either gathered together by the Supervisor of the centre and returned by post or staff members could return them individually by post; stamped, addressed return envelopes were provided. A number of telephone follow-ups were necessary to check whether

[5]The circumstances surrounding these incidents are described in more detail, from the staff members' point of view, in Chapter six.

centres would take part and to find out the number of survey forms necessary. These calls gave Supervisors an opportunity to ask any questions about what the survey involved; it was explained that the survey was in two parts, one part seeking general factual information, the other seeking information about how workers viewed their jobs.

The largest number of surveys sent to any one centre was fifteen; the smallest centre taking part had five staff. Full-time, part-time and job-share staff were all surveyed; relieving staff were not, unless they were classed as long-term relievers (i.e. filling in for someone on maternity or parental leave, someone taking extended sick leave, etc.).

Of the 39 surveys distributed, 32 were completed and returned (82%); seven staff who were eligible to respond did not. The reasons given for not responding were absence from the centre due to extended sick leave (two surveys), departure of staff due to resignation (two surveys), recent death of a partner (one survey) and the survey form being misplaced (one survey) and declining to fill in the survey form, no reason given (one survey).

Once received, the survey responses were collated. Demographic data, such as age and rates of pay was ordered into tables. Responses in the form of comments were listed and coded into categories to identify trends. This data is summarised in Chapter five.

Four interviews were conducted in addition to the written surveys. The supervisor of the fourth private centre agreed to be interviewed and the staff member who had been intimidated in the fifth private centre *asked* to be

interviewed. Two further interviews were conducted, to give a total of three interviews with staff from private centres and one with a staff member from a non-profit centre. A summary of their interview responses is presented in Chapter six.

Chapter five

Summary of survey responses

At the time data was gathered for this project, there were 68 childcare centres in the wider Christchurch area. Of these, 22 were in private ownership (i.e. owned entirely by one individual, or two individuals in partnership, as a going business concern). Of the other 46 centres, these were either owned and/or managed by charitable trusts (ten centres), parent co-operatives (nine centres), an allied institution (e.g. a university; 11 centres) or they were operating as community creches, usually under the auspices of the City Council (16 centres).

In total, nine childcare workers from private centres and 23 workers from non-profit centres responded to the survey; every respondent was a woman.

How old are you?

The age range of staff within the two types of centre was identical (18 to 57 years) but the average age of staff in non-profit centres was slightly higher (33.5 years, compared to 29 years in private centres).

What formal qualifications, apart from early childhood qualifications, do you have? What formal early childhood qualifications do you have?

One person surveyed from a private centre had no formal qualifications of any type and three of the private centre workers surveyed had no formal qualifications related to early childhood. The proportions of untrained staff were approximately the same in non-profit centres but there was a greater variety of early childhood qualifications within the group.

How long have you worked in early childhood?

A more dramatic contrast appeared when looking at experience in early childhood settings (including having raised one's own children) where workers in private centres had an average of *three* years experience, compared to an average of *nine-and-a-half* years experience amongst staff from non-profit centres.

How long have you worked in this centre?

A marked contrast appeared when comparing staff turnover between the two types of centre. The average length of time employed in the centre, when surveyed, was *ten months* in private centres, with the longest-serving employee having worked in the centre for one year and eight months; amongst the non-profit centres surveyed the average length of time employed in the centre was *one year and eight months*, with the longest-serving staff member having been in

one centre for three years and six months. Each category included a centre which had opened within the last two years.

What award are you employed under? What conditions of service do you receive, if any, which are over and above your award entitlement?

Three of the nine workers from private centres did not know under which award they were employed; in fact, one of the two private centres was party to the National Award, the other to the Consenting Parties award. Six of these workers believed they did not receive conditions above award entitlement, one thought that she did, and two didn't know. Five of the staff surveyed from non-profit centres didn't know which award they were employed under; the other 18 all knew their employers were party to the Consenting Parties award. Ten of these workers believed they were receiving conditions above their entitlement under the award, three said they didn't receive any additional conditions, and ten didn't know.

What is your current hourly rate of pay?

A further contrast between the two types of centre was in rates of pay. Four workers in private centres did not know what their hourly rate of pay was, and of those who did, rates ranged from $8.70 to $12.50 per hour. Everyone surveyed from non-profit centres knew their rate of pay, which ranged from $9.05 per hour (for a reliever) to $18.66 per hour. The *average* rate of pay in the private centres was $10.77; in the non-profit centres it was $11.75.

How many days leave did you take in 1990?

Of staff who had been entitled to take leave during 1990, in private centres this ranged from zero to sixty days (in one case of extended illness) with an average of twelve days off; in non-profit centres, the range was lower (zero to 46 days) but the average *greater*, at 16.5 days. In the main, those staff who took leave for more than ten days in the year did so during their children's term holidays. Overall, very little leave was taken for personal illness.

What on-going training, if any, are you involved in at the moment?

Of the 32 women who replied to the survey, 22 were in some form of on-going training (69%). Only six of these were for basic qualifications and almost all of the remainder were working towards equivalence with three-year training, chiefly by correspondence.

What attracted you to work in childcare?

Overwhelmingly, staff had been attracted to childcare by a 'love of children' (17 of the staff surveyed in non-profit centres, and five of those from private centres).

> I decided that a job working with children would be a fulfilling and enlightening change. I have always enjoyed the interaction involved with children and the satisfaction received through watching children prosper and thrive.

The next most common reason was the desire to see good quality childcare provided, although this was mentioned only by staff in non-profit centres.

> A genuine love of children and a desire to nurture them and encourage learning in a fun way. This work offered a challenge because I feel very strongly that there is a need for extremely high quality childcare.

Two of the workers in private centres didn't know what attracted them to the job. Other reasons for choosing to work in childcare included the desire for a job change, being able to take one's children to work, childcare being the only work available, wanting to work with other adults, self-development, career choice and the nature of the job (e.g. being able to spend some time outside). Only one person (from a non-profit centre) was attracted by the pay and job conditions.

Why do you continue to work in childcare at present?

The trend toward 'enjoying the children' was not as apparent, however, when employees were asked why they *continued* to work in childcare. Four staff of private centres said they enjoyed the children and four mentioned that they felt childcare was important and necessary; one enjoyed working with other adults and one mentioned that the pay and conditions were good. In non-profit centres half the staff mentioned enjoying the children but the next most important aspects (eight responses each) were the pay and conditions, and the enjoyment gained from working with other adults, including parents.

> Simply because I enjoy my job and love the children. The staff I work with are great and have become my best friends. My hourly rate of pay is good and my hours are great.

The next most important aspect (four responses) was that the job gave opportunities to gain qualifications and career advancement. Only one person

mentioned the difficulty of finding another job as a reason for staying in childcare.

What aspects of your job do you value most?

For staff in both types of centres, seeing children develop and the positive reactions received from children were the most valued aspects of the job; one or both of these aspects was mentioned by almost every worker. Second to this, and mentioned by about half, was the reward of being appreciated by other adults, especially parents.

> Being able to teach and care for the children. Watching them grow and learning, knowing you are part of it and help in some ways. Seeing them so happy!
>
> Happy children. Content and enthusiastic staff. Positive comments from parents and their pleasure in being assured that their children are having a great time.

What is/are the most difficult aspect(s) of your job?

When questioned about the most negative aspects of the job however, there appeared a much wider and more varied group of responses. Two workers in private centres mentioned that they found dealing with sick children brought to the centre to be particularly difficult. No other aspect received more than one comment from staff in the private centres, but other concerns included busy days, tensions between work and home, bad manners in children, the physical and emotional stresses, lack of time, lack of training for the job, the challenge of providing a sufficient number and variety of appropriate activities for the children and feeling uncomfortable about the centre being run as a "business". In non-profit centres the presence of sick, neglected or abused children was also

named most commonly as the most difficult aspect (nine responses), followed by stress and illness, and lack of equipment or facilities. Several staff from one non-profit centre complained of the inadequacy of the staffroom. Some staff also mentioned friction over staff attitudes to childcare as a difficulty for them; the two following comments were made by staff from *different* centres, when asked about the most difficult aspects of their job:

> Older staff members who have been out of the workforce for some time [and] don't really believe in childcare (basically believe in mothers and preschoolers being at home). I don't know whether they realise it (it has been pointed out) but this reflects very strongly in their attitude to work and relationships with parents and children.
>
> Having to accept that these young children are at childcare and not at home with their parent.

What is/are the main difference(s) in your pay and working conditions at this centre, compared to other centres where you have worked?

Generally speaking, staff in both types of centre were now experiencing better pay and working conditions than in centres in which they had worked previously, although a large number of respondents had never worked in another centre so they were unable to comment. Other aspects which staff perceived as being improvements over previous work situations were having more staff and the provision of better programmes for the children in their current centre.

What problems, if any, have you encountered in dealing with your employer in this centre?

Four of the nine workers in private centres had no problems to report concerning their current employer. Of the others, problems such as lack of understanding of the work involved in childcare, "unreasonable demands", favouritism in dealing with staff and implying guilt when sick leave was taken were mentioned. Overwhelmingly, of the 21 staff from non-profit centres who replied to this question, nineteen reported that they had no problems to report and several mentioned that any difficulties which arose were quickly resolved.[6]

What problems have you experienced in dealing with your employer(s) in other centres where you have worked?

The problems mentioned related to previous employers were diverse. The majority of the staff who had worked elsewhere in childcare had at some time been employed in private centres. This group mentioned as problems issues of intimidation, poor staffing, poor facilities, poor wages and conditions, non-unionisation, lack of communication and lack of recognition of qualifications.

> [My pay is] much higher, as we are on the Consenting Parties. My other centre, the employer was a slave driver, my qualification was unrecognised by her, so I got paid $2.00 less an hour (even more I think) than I am on now. We also had very long hours of work, 7.30 - 4.30 or 8.45 - 5.45 (we had 1 hour for lunch though), which I found rather exhausting.

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[6] An interesting issue which arose out of this question was the apparent confusion amongst some staff as to the identity of the 'employer' in the centre, with several staff referring directly to the *supervisor* as the employer. In non-profit centres in particular, the supervisor is frequently a member of the managing group and, because they are in constant contact with staff, they often carry out many of the day-to-day tasks of the employer, such as arranging for relieving staff. The difficulty for supervisors is, of course, that they are *also* an employee.

> Wouldn't pay me for statutory holidays over Christmas. Would leave me as an untrained childcare worker on $6.09 an hour in charge of the centre. I would not get spoken to for about a week if I had one day off sick.

Those who had worked previously in non-profit centres mentioned slightly different issues - poor management and co-ordination by committees, isolation from the employer, lack of communication and poor provision of equipment and facilities.

> Community organised creches run by constantly changing committees are a nightmare. I don't ever want to put myself through that again!

If you could change aspects of your working conditions, what changes would you make,* apart from *increasing your wages?

One of the nine employees of a private centre had no desired changes in their current circumstances, whereas one-quarter of those in non-profit centres could not identify anything they would wish to change. In both private and non-profit centres the most desired changes were in equipment and facilities.

> Enlarge bathroom.
>
> A larger centre to cater for more children
>
> More equipment.

For staff of private centres the next most desired changes were to award conditions, such as sick leave, whereas in non-profit centres workers next desired more staff, followed by more release time and better conditions. Staff of private centres also desired more recognition for their work, less stress and more impartiality on the part of the employer when dealing with staff.

> Have an hour for lunch, have my non-child contact time. Able to ask for time off without feeling it was going to throw everyone out of order. NO MORE FAVOURITISM!!!

Other factors mentioned by workers in non-profit centres were better communication amongst staff, less structure in the programme offered to the children and a more varied mix of staff ages and talents.

How do you see your future in childcare?

Staff of both types of centres were generally optimistic about their future in childcare, although few saw themselves as staying in this line of work for more than the next few years.

> Hopefully opening a childcare centre of my own. I do want to work in another centre before this. Hopefully I haven't completely done my back in before then.
>
> I intend being in childcare for quite a long time - although I hope I will be able to take a break and come back in case I "burn out".
>
> I would like to stay in childcare but I don't want to work long hours. I like finishing at 3 p.m. like I do now. I would maybe like to move onto something, eventually, that deals with the child's development and family more than at the moment. Maybe doing a part-time degree at University is on the cards.
>
> I enjoy working in childcare at the moment but I can't see me working with children forever.

How do you see the future of childcare in New Zealand?

Responses to this question were overwhelmingly pessimistic.

> I think childcare will be more and more in demand and I feel good centres will have to charge higher fees to continue their standards especially if government funding is cut.

> We have come a long way in [the] last few years but [I] feel backward steps approaching.
>
> At the moment it is quite.....shaky. Hopefully they will get all the problems sorted out and the government will come out of the Dark Ages and see what is going on and what is needed.
>
> I don't think it's going to be around very long which is a shame. There [will] be no money for funds, no subsidies.

One reply also expressed concern at the need for childcare.

> As an "old fashioned" person it horrifies me to see the attitude today that it is every parent's right to expect someone else to do their childrearing for them. I would like to see them put their children first for a few years at least. I think parents should pay a lot more if they expect quality childcare.

Despite differing responses to several of the other questions, it was in these areas of predicting the future of childcare and their own employment paths in childcare that the responses of staff in private and non-profit centres showed the most similarity.

Discussion

In a comprehensive survey of childcare centre staff carried out in the United States, *The National Child Care Staffing Survey* (Whitebook *et al.*, 1989), the pay and working conditions of childcare workers were compared according to whether they worked in non-profit or for-profit centres. In the United States, staff in non-profit and church centres were found to receive higher wages than staff in other types of centres. Staff turnover rates were lower in non-profit centres, and staff in non-profit centres received more benefits, experienced better working conditions and were more likely to have paid non-contact time, paid breaks and compensation for overtime. Staff in non-profit centres in the United States also viewed their work as a career and expressed greater job satisfaction

and commitment to their jobs than their colleagues in for-profit centres. Educational levels and levels of early childhood training were also higher amongst staff in non-profit centres and staff in non-profit centres were found to be more experienced than staff in for-profit centres.

Similar trends to those found in the United States have appeared amongst this relatively small sample of New Zealand childcare workers. Workers in non-profit centres surveyed in this study were, on average, slightly better paid; overall they had better job satisfaction and enjoyed better conditions of service; they tended to be more experienced in working with young children; and non-profit centres showed evidence of slower staff turnover (although Smith (1980) found that childcare centres overall had high staff turnover, with more than 57% of staff staying in centres for less than two years).

Further contrasts between the two types of centre arose when staff were asked questions about how they perceived the motivations behind their day-to-day work. While almost all staff mentioned a love of children as being a major motivating factor, staff in non-profit centres were, proportionately, more likely to mention the importance of childcare as a service and/or their training and career aspirations as an important factor, as well as pay and conditions and the enjoyment of regular contact with other adults.

Smith and Swain (1988), in discussing job satisfaction amongst childcare workers, refer to other studies which suggest that enjoyment in working with young children is an intensely motivating factor for childcare workers and that they will often overlook factors such as low pay because of the intrinsic rewards of the work (pp. 148 - 151). Pettygrove *et al.* (1984) suggest that the acceptance

of poor conditions by childcare workers, because of their reliance on the positive intrinsic aspects of the work, leads to poor self-image amongst workers, contributing to their lack of motivation to instigate changes in their working circumstances.

Staff responding to this survey generally found having to deal with sick children brought to the centre and poor equipment and facilities to be the most difficult aspects of their work, followed by stress and personal illness; it was interesting to note, therefore, how little sick leave was taken last year by those answering the survey. Staff of non-profit centres appreciated having more staff as an improvement over previous centres in which they had worked and staff in both types of centres were now experiencing better pay and conditions than in the past (although this was to be expected with recent dramatic improvements to award conditions in early childhood).

When asked about problems experienced in dealing with their employer, distinct differences began to appear between the two groups. For staff in non-profit centres problems tended to be material, such as lack of equipment and facilities, or structural, such as poor communication and turnover of management committee members. In private centres however, issues were much more personal, such as favouritism in dealing with staff, unreasonable demands, intimidation, lack of recognition of experience and qualifications and being made to feel guilty for taking leave. Overall, staff in non-profit centres were very happy with the relationship they had with their employer and found any problems were quickly resolved. Staff of private centres were more likely to want better pay and industrial conditions, whereas staff in non-profit centres

were more likely to want more time for preparation and planning and additional staffing.

Staff in both types of centre were generally optimistic about their future in childcare although only a minority saw themselves working in childcare long-term. In contrast to this optimism, concerns about the future of childcare generally were strong and tended to be centred around the lack of clarity surrounding current government policy.

Overall, the results described here are consistent with other studies of childcare workers, both here and in the United States. A positive correlation between private centres and poorer pay and conditions of service appears in this study but it must be noted that *overall*, pay and working conditions for childcare workers are still poor in relation to similar jobs, such as kindergarten teaching. The reason *why* staff should experience poorer conditions when working in privately owned centres appears, *prima facie*, to be the profit motive, the key factor which, in theory, distinguishes the management of privately owned from non-profit centres (but perhaps the reasons for the distinctions between the two types of centres cannot be fully explained without conducting similar research into the beliefs and motivations of childcare centre owners).

The issue is, however, more complex than that. Not all private centres are operated to provide a 'profit'; indeed in the present climate, this is not always possible. Also, 'working conditions' are not just comprised of pay and award conditions, but include many qualitative aspects of time spent 'on the job'. Comments made by the women responding to this survey suggest that these qualitative aspects frequently outweigh the industrial aspects of their work and

that, in particular, the satisfaction of working with young children is an enormous reward.

Chapter six

Interview responses

Chapter five has summarised the responses of those childcare workers who contributed to the written survey. In addition to the 32 women who completed the survey, four women were interviewed in depth about their experiences working in childcare. Two of these women came from centres where employees had completed the written survey. These women were approached for interview based on their written responses; one was working in a privately-owned centre, the other in a non-profit centre.

The other two women came to be interviewed by unusual processes. The first was the supervisor of one of the private centres where employees had been approached to complete the written survey but the employer had intervened to stop staff responding. This supervisor felt that she would still like to be involved in the project and that she could contribute much relevant information; she was prepared to do this despite intimidation from her employer. The second of these two women had heard of the project and *asked* to be interviewed because of the nature of her experiences; she had also been employed in a private centre, but had recently resigned and was about to begin work in a non-profit centre.

Purpose of the Interviews

The interviews sought primarily to gain information related to the research questions by asking about the conditions of service the women were experiencing and how they thought their experiences were affected by the type of management structure under which they worked. Secondly, the interviews sought to gain anecdotal evidence related to some of the general themes which had arisen from the written surveys, including the most rewarding aspect of their job and what had attracted them to this type of work.

The Participants

Each interview was conducted around the research questions. However, because of the varying nature of the experiences each of the women had had in childcare, each interview took on a theme of its own.

Lorraine[7] was the only woman, of the four interviewed, currently working in a non-profit centre. She had worked in one other centre, also non-profit, and had been in childcare for over nine years; she was now a supervisor, aged in her mid-twenties. In her written survey responses she had referred frequently to the stresses of the supervisory role, so this theme was pursued in her interview. She was also questioned about some of the difficulties she had experienced in working in non-profit centres.

7 Names used here are pseudonyms.

Joanna, in her mid-thirties, was also a supervisor but in a private centre, where she had worked for the last seven years. This was the only centre in which she had worked. Joanna had observed other staff in the centre receiving poor treatment from her employer but had avoided dealing with this until she received the same treatment herself and this was the main theme of her interview.

Amanda was also currently working in a privately owned centre. She was finding it a very rewarding environment, particularly after considerable difficulties in her previous position, also in a privately owned centre. Amanda was in her early twenties and had trained as a nanny prior to entering childcare.

Marsha's background was in primary school teaching; she had begun working in a private childcare centre when she was unable to find a position in a primary school. She had been employed first as a childcare worker, then as assistant supervisor, but had recently resigned. The circumstances surrounding her resignation dictated the main theme of her interview.

Lorraine

Lorraine described herself as "the meat in the sandwich between the committee and the staff" in her role as supervisor, with each party having heavy expectations of her to meet their requirements. She felt that staff in particular perceived her as "management", rather than as a colleague, and often confused her role with that of their employer. This had led to a progressive decline in her role as a childcare worker within the centre and a certain amount of sadness for her.

> Yes, I like my job but I do feel sad.....and sometimes I used to think 'Oh God it'd be just nice to be a childcare worker again and to enjoy the children'.

Despite this feeling however, Lorraine still generally enjoyed her job and found the management committee of the centre supportive and co-operative.

> All of them are actually parents of children at the centre, which is really good, or parents who've had children at the centre and have gone off to school now, and have stayed on, so the committee's been really stable and they're just really good because they're there, they're visiting the centre every day or coming in, so it's not me on my own at all and.....yes the committee are really good and they're all really positive.....

For Lorraine, the trust which the committee placed in her meant a large and complex job description, including considerable administrative work, liaison with parents and other agencies, overseeing the programme of care and education within the centre, and liaison with staff. Management issues would need to be "fairly big" before Lorraine would take them to a committee meeting and daily contact with committee members usually meant that urgent issues were dealt with easily.

In contrast to her current position, Lorraine had experienced a very different style of supervision in the other non-profit childcare centre where she had worked as a childcare worker. The supervisor of that centre had had the same type of responsibilities as Lorraine had in her current position but for Lorraine there had been considerable tension in working under her previous supervisor's direction.

> There was just all the staff, who had no sort of responsibility really at all, and there she was, boss, and told us how things were done and, when I look back, I mean, we did nothing with those kids really.

For Lorraine and her co-workers this lack of responsibility and autonomy also had spin-offs for the industrial side of her employment. When questioned about issues such as pay and award conditions in her previous centre she reflected on her lack of understanding of her circumstances, describing herself as "naive".

> We had no idea of any of that, I mean, we'd just work and we'd get our pay and [the supervisor] would be the boss, who we thought was in charge in overseeing all that, but whether she was scared.....or just didn't want us getting any money, we just accepted what we got and we....didn't think to question.....any of those things, except towards the end and we realised that maybe the pay office or salary people should be looking into what we were getting and the way things were running.....

Through a process of isolation from information, and favouritism which isolated staff from each other, Lorraine and her co-workers were kept from becoming industrially aware.

> I got sent on a couple of in-service courses, I was probably the only one who ever did, because I was the golden girl for a while.....we didn't know about things.....I completed my N.Z.C.A. training and that was it, I didn't know of anything else.....

This extended to keeping staff away from contact with parents.

> Like if she thought you were having some sort of conversation with a parent then she'd be in there, taking over from you, and for years I though, oh the parents don't like me.....[A] number of parent's I've discussed [it] with afterwards or met up [with] socially or somewhere [have] sort of said "Oh, God wasn't she a battleaxe" and they were scared of her, and they all say how scared they were of her and the position their kids had in the centre.....They thought that we, the staff, didn't like them because we wouldn't talk to them, and we weren't *allowed* to talk to them.

Lorraine was able now, nearly four years later, to reflect on her earlier experience and identify the ways in which staff had been intimidated in her previous centre. She described some of the ways the supervisor had used her

almost total responsibility for management of the centre to make staff vulnerable, such as suggesting to temporary staff that their employment might not be continued.

Lorraine's description of her current role as supervisor, by comparison included close liaison with staff, parents and management. She also indicated that to be considered a valued colleague was of considerable importance.

Joanna

Joanna was experiencing considerable difficulties with her employer, a woman for whom she had worked for the last seven years. Joanna believed that most of these difficulties were related to financial difficulties which the centre had recently been facing and that staff were feeling the impact of the stress their employer was under.

> One day.....[her employer] came back from the bank and broke down in tears and said she'd have to sell her house to pay off her bills.....She actually pays me once a month and mine.....was paid before the problem, the week before, but the cheque bounced.

This stress had manifested itself in constant harassment of staff whilst going about their work. Because their employer spent most of her time at the centre, despite having a paid supervisor, staff were always subject to her attentions.

> Oh, picking holes in everything that you were doing basically, you know, particularly in the preschool, not so much in the nursery, but in the preschool it was hard, at the time, there was quite a few weeks where every time she came out into the preschool something was wrong. No matter what you were doing you weren't doing it right.

Joanna had been particularly exposed in her role as supervisor, stating that "it all fell back on me". At the same time however, her employer had found an

extremely effective way of undermining Joanna: a progressive reduction in Joanna's responsibilities as supervisor.

> We were told at the staff meeting that any mail addressed to the supervisor of the centre was to go straight to [the owner] because she was the 'head supervisor'.....and that anybody ringing up from outside the centre,.....any business coming from outside, it was not to be handled by anyone else but [the owner]

J.N. So what things would you change about your job if you could?

> Well, I personally would just like to have that bit of authority back that I thought a supervisor should have. To be able to say yes to people or something, you know, things like that, we'd love to have you here. Which I don't feel I've actually got at the moment.....when I first took over as supervisor I probably did just about everything.....

In combination with this, Joanna's overall responsibility for the centre had been removed, with another *untrained* staff member being given responsibility for managing the centre in the owner's absence.

> They decided obviously .....that they can't trust me, and they told me one day that they'd decided to make [another staff member] the manager, as they call it. She works in the nursery, which means that if neither of them are in the centre then she's in charge.....which was an interesting move. I mean, I got quite upset over that one.....

Since becoming disenchanted with her job, Joanna had investigated conditions in other centres and found out, for the first time, how low her pay way in comparison to that of supervisors of other centres.

Joanna had recently joined the childcare worker's union following her employer having presented staff with a *fait accompli* in the form of a contract, to take effect once their award expired. This contract had been presented to staff at a recent staff meeting and the staff had asked their employer (and her husband who always attended and ran these 'staff meetings') to leave the meeting whilst it was discussed by staff.

J.N. What sort of pressure was put on you to accept that contract? Was there any pressure?

> I actually thought there was. We actually got the impression that she wanted us to read it and decide what we wanted and get it signed. And yet.....I think she got a bit of a shock to think there was actually quite a bit of opposition against it at the meeting.....We weren't too happy about things.

These 'staff meetings' were a particular source of frustration for Joanna. The meetings were an opportunity for staff to pass on to their employers requests for repairs about the centre and so on but also for the owner and her husband to express concerns about staff performance. Opportunities for staff to get together on a regular, formal basis had been removed from their routine.

> She actually had it organised so that we had an hour every Wednesday afternoon when all the staff could be together, but she actually stopped that which was a shame because it's very hard.....while the children are there [to] sit down and.....discuss it while you're watching, supervising the children.

J.N. So is there ever actually any opportunity? Do you have a staffroom?

> No, we use her kitchen.....Most of the talking we do is if the children are outside playing.....that sort of thing.....Most of the rest of the time, [the preschool] staff, we don't have morning tea with the nursery staff or anything usually, so you can't.....What really is needed is for everyone to get together and discuss it without them, yes.

J.N. What sorts of things do you think you'd discuss?

> Oh, all sorts. I suppose what really gets up most of us is knowing, particularly myself having had that responsibility of a supervisor - I knew basically what the centre was spending its money on and this sort of thing.....I could actually sit back and say where the charter money [had] gone. We discussed a lot of that in the times we've had together.....

Isolation of staff from each other in the centre in this way was proving to be particularly effective.

J.N. So those are the things you [illegible] if you had an opportunity?

> Probably, because it would be a lot easier to talk about it and get everybody's views that way because at the moment there might be two of us that have a talk about it because that's about all that really ever gets together to have a talk at one time, so, you don't really know how someone else might really feel about it.

In the absence of programme planning meetings, the centre was operating according to a programme imposed by the owner.

> She'd thrown this programme at us, instead of giving us a chance to get together and plan a programme. She'd made one up in front of us and said right, this is what she wants, this is how we have to do it, and it had no provisions on it for letting the children outside to play or anything like this.
>
> It was very nice last week with the nice warn weather, we were sort of a bit lax on it and let the children outside a bit more.....[The owner] wasn't there most of the time so it didn't matter.

Other particularly difficult aspects of Joanna's job were the high staff turnover in the centre and the employment of untrained staff. One other staff member had been in the centre two years but the rest had only been employed for a matter of months; Joanna estimated that the average length of employment in the centre was about one year.

J.N. Do you find it difficult working with untrained staff?

> It has been. It's not so much as [another staff member] who's a mother, has a fair idea anyway, bringing up five children on her own, but the younger ones it can be because.....we've changed staff a lot, and that's really hard. I find it really hard because you've got to start training them as soon as you get to know them.

J.N. What do you think caused the staff turnover?

> Yes, well I've often wondered about that. I think it probably has a lot to do with [the owner's] attitude towards people myself. I stay because..... it only takes me five minutes to walk to work, I like it. I live in the area and my children both go to school in this area. I'm there, you know, I can be working and still really be there for them, which is really why I've stayed.

The combination of location and the financial necessity to stay in paid work meant that Joanna had been prepared to endure considerable unhappiness at work.

> She makes things quite hard for me, when she was having this financial difficulty, to the extent that if I didn't need the job I would have handed in my notice there and then. And I've said I'd actually do it. When I sit back and think of it, it never really worried me in the past because I thought 'Oh yeah, well I'll just do my job,' but then when it happened to the others I sort of sat back and thought 'Well, wait a minute, I've actually seen her do that to others in the past.....'

J.N. You obviously get a bit down in spirits. What is it that's keeping you going now?

> Oh, I think only just the simple fact that I need the job, I've got to work, just for my family's security.

Joanna believed however that the difficulties she was experiencing were not affecting her work with the children, saying that "one way of getting away from it actually is to work with the children because that takes your mind off it a bit". However, she did state that high staff turnover had a negative effect on the children.

> It does have an effect on the children because, not perhaps all the children that it shows, but there are certain ones who get really attached to a staff member and then they leave and you do actually see quite a different reaction from the children in the different moods for a few weeks.

Apart from enjoying the children, contact with parents was the other rewarding aspect of Joanna's position.

> The parents are really neat. I actually, as another part of the job, I get to sit and talk to the parents. Particularly the ones that have been here for a while. They're the ones that are more likely to praise you for doing a good job.

The future for Joanna was insecure. She stated that "When it came over on the Budget that funding was cut, one of [her employer's] first comments was 'That's somebody's wages'".

Amanda

Amanda had previously worked in a privately-owned childcare centre which she described as "up market". Her four employers had been parents using another private centre and had opened their own centre out of a desire to provide a better standard of care. Unfortunately, the four employers had been unable to agree on a number of matters and had recently sold the centre.

> They couldn't agree on anything so they liquidated, sold the business....

J.N. What sort of things would they not agree on?

> Money, what to do with us, what to tell us, what they wanted us to do, it was always a fight, we had the Police called in and everything, it was awful.

J.N. How did the Police come to be called in?

> The supervisor, she refused to do something that they wanted her to do because she just said she just didn't agree with what they were wanting her to do. I can't remember what it was and [the owner] goes "Insubordination" and then she said "I'm ringing [a co-employer]" and she rings [her]. It was a horrible situation, and it ended up [the co-employer] rushing along, she rung the Police at work, and the Police came in and they just told them "Oh stop being stupid" and "Get your domestics sorted out", "Not in front of your workers" and stuff like that.

An additional source of tension between employers and staff was the amount of direction trained staff were being given by their employers, who had no childcare training, concerning professional childcare matters. Staff were drawn into disagreements between employers in an attempt to gain ground in a variety of battles related to the programme and financial management of the centre.

[One of the employers] used to ring me up and try to get me on her side. She used to tell me all these things at God knows what time of night, eleven o'clock at night, all the time, and I'm sure she was drinking when she was talking. Oh gee I'm glad I'm out of there now, just thinking back, I mean, it's bringing things to my mind.

She got us to write down something against [the other employers].....I've realised, looking back on it, what did we do that for? I mean, it was so stupid. She was using it just in case it needed a court case or something like that.

J.N. How did she get you to do these things?

We had a meeting together one night, just the girls, they didn't come.....[The other employers] were really over booking us, totally, and they were doing other things as well that she didn't agree with so she, yes, she got us to write down what we didn't like about them and sign it.

J.N. What would she have done if you had refused to do that?

Well I'm not really sure what she would've done, but she made life that hard. She also didn't like the union.....There's a lot of people out there to exploit childcare workers I feel, especially people like them.....I'd only just come out of training.....they could just pay us really quite low rates, because we'd only just started.....

Staff difficulties in the centre had led to them being closely involved with their industrial union. Despite union protection however, Amanda and her co-workers were still vulnerable on a day-to-day basis.

We had that National Award meeting towards the end of last year. That didn't go down at all. She got me and she said "I pay you 11c above the" - whatever rate I'm supposed to be getting - "and if I hear you going on about unions again, that's it, you're out the door, as flash as quick lightning". You know, she'd just get me on something really niggly.

J.N. What sort of things did she try and get you on?

Just the way I worked and stuff like that.....It was so stressful, she just, just made me, made us fearful.....We were quite fearful, in a way, for our jobs and I was really lucky to find [the centre where she was now working].....

I ended up getting the job at [her present centre] and I gave her my notice.....and she just went berserk.

For Amanda, her level of work-related stress was also reflected in her health.

> I was very sick, and stress-related illnesses. I had really bad chest infections and I just got really run down. I think it was just my first year as well in childcare, but I started getting grouchy at the children and that.....I'm just trying to think, it was just, yes, it was really hard, really really hard.

Amanda had since found employment in another private centre where she is much happier although she is still experiencing some difficulties related to her employer. Principally these involve favouritism of some staff members over others. Amanda perceives her conditions of service as being poorer than those of some of her co-workers because her employer's expectations of some staff, including Amanda, are higher than for other staff. Some staff had been given additional time off for personal commitments which Amanda did not feel in a position to ask for.

> [She's] away 'til, 'til whenever she wants to get back, you know, and it's, that's really hard because you know we're sticking at it the whole time and we ask for time off and we rarely get somebody in to help unless we're really busy.

This problem sometimes threatens the legality of Amanda's work environment.

> A lot of the time.....our ratios are not very often legal. We're over now, we shouldn't really have so many children, and I think they're getting a bit greedy sometimes, they have been.

Amanda had not attempted to speak to her employer about some of her concerns, preferring instead to speak to the supervisor, who had almost total responsibility for the management of the centre. This too was difficult for Amanda, but she had had some success.

> I said.....if you didn't like us doing that to [a child[why didn't you come up to us.....you know, we were busy, we had ten screaming kids.....And she went 'Oh', you know, and I actually thought to myself 'Gosh, I actually did that,' and ever since then she's been really good. Which was about three weeks, four weeks ago.

In comparison to Joanna's centre, Amanda found staff meetings at her centre very useful. Activities for children are planned, the centre newsletter written, correspondence and available courses discussed and complaints and requests dealt with. This is the main forum for communication between staff, supervisor and their employer, who also attends these meetings.

Despite the difficulties Amanda had experienced whilst working in private centres, she eventually hoped to open a centre of her own, once she had a few more years experience in childcare centres.

Marsha

Marsha had been a primary school teacher and had entered childcare expecting it to be "a piece of cake after teaching". At first she had found the work "boring" but, in hindsight, she felt that the job could have been "terrific" if she had known more about what was possible.

> There was nothing happening. Throughout the whole day it was just toys on the shelves that the children chose from and that was it. And you took them outside if it was sunny and they played on the bikes or the swings or the sandpit, and that was virtually it. There was no painting or cutting out or anything.....

Staff had no input into activities for the children

> [The employer's] input was total. What she said went in the whole centre, nobody else actually had any other input. This was how she wanted it done and that's how it was done. And while you were 'in'

> with her, while you were popular, you were allowed a little bit of input, if you made a suggestion she would look at it, but once you were 'out' that was it. She just absolutely wiped anything that you may want to do.

Marsha's lack of early childhood background meant that she found the provision of appropriate activities difficult although she had some input from students on teaching practice from the local College of Education. Staff with early childhood experience had been employed previously in the centre, but no longer.

> [The employer] had already had four early childhood trained people.....[she] said to the [reviewer from the Education Review Office] that she'd tried these early childhood trained people and never again, they were absolutely useless and she wouldn't have them in her centre again.

As with Joanna and Amanda, Marsha was questioned about how she was treated on a day to day basis, particularly when, as Marsha put it, her employer "got a down" on one of her staff members.

> She got very cool. She never spoke to me unless she had to and then when she did speak to me it was in a very very polite voice. She'd jump on me for anything I did.....I'd have about twenty children, toddlers and over-two's, to look after and she'd come roaring in and see somebody that wasn't behaving themselves properly, and she'd jump on me and say 'Look at these children, look at these children, get them all organised,' but she would never stop to look where were the rest of the staff.....Why was I the only one in there with all these children? And that used to happen all the time in the end.

Like Joanna, Marsha eventually found herself in a supervisory position with untrained staff under her direction.

> I really don't think they had any idea and I think they felt they were doing their job by looking after these babies and changing them and that was their job and they didn't know anything else.

Marsha was concerned these other staff were using the infant caregiving routines in the centre to avoid activities with older children. This meant that

she was often left with sole supervision of up to twenty children. Marsha found it difficult to communicate her concerns at staff meetings, which were run by her employer, stating that "She was in this very powerful position which is what she wanted all the time and we'd sit there listening, and that was it, that was the finish of the meeting". Marsha did approach her employer privately with her concerns but despite assurances that matters would be raised with staff, they never were. When Marsha finally raised a matter in a meeting, her employer's response was to imply that Marsha's job was not secure.

> She came to the meeting and totally out of the blue she pulled out this form and she said 'The under-twos are making money, they're just starting to be profitable. The over-twos are totally unprofitable, I'm going to have to look at my staffing for the over-twos,' and I got a real shock, expecting I had this quite secure job .....I said 'We had twelve children today. How many staff are you saying should look after these twelve children?' and she said 'One'.....and one of the other [staff] said 'If you're not happy with it go and contact your local MP'. And that was the end of the conversation, and [the employer] said "Discussion closed, I don't want to talk about it any more". And that was the end of it and that was the only time I'd ever tried to have input.

At one stage Marsha's employer had attempted to move the staff of the centre from the Consenting Parties award to the less attractive National award.

> After I'd said this about the staffing she got out the new award book and said 'This is the new award we're all under now, I'm out of that Consenting Parties award.....this is the new one, this is the National'. She said 'You're on three weeks holiday now', and she said 'And I only have to pay assistant supervisors $11.17' - I think it was 'an hour' - and she looked me in the eye and she said 'You think about that'.

Marsha became increasingly depressed about her circumstances and the poor supervision of children in the centre but remained in the position because "I was still thinking 'Well, it's a job and it's good money and we need the money'". Marsha had sought support from the childcare workers' union and this was an additional source of irritation for her employer.

She'd got everybody else to resign from the union but I hadn't and [another staff member] hadn't and she knew [the other staff member] was too scared to ever use the union against her but she was very worried about me because she just didn't know how far I'd be prepared to go because I never actually ever said what my union affiliations were.

J.N. How did she get everyone to resign from the union?

She just went on and on all the time about how dreadful the union was and how they undermined everything that ever went on in workplaces and she couldn't stand having union workers in the place. They would try and run the place and it was her business, and it just went on and on.....

After one incident in particular, Marsha did approach the union for advice.

I was quite devastated at that stage because she'd threatened me and she'd said to pack my bags and leave if I couldn't give her total loyalty, and total loyalty meant getting out of the union and everything, and they said 'You just can't stay there', and it's at that stage that I made the decision, 'Right, I just can't take any more'.....On the Friday when I was due to go she came up to me right at the end with my cheque and she said 'Don't you ever cross me again.....If you ever cross me again you'll know about it.....Get this letter, this cheque down to the union and have them sort it out, and have them be aware that I have paid you', and she said 'You're on the list'. I said "What list [ ]?' and she said 'The **list**', and I said 'Well, what list is that?' and she said 'Just remember you're on the list'.

Marsha was amazed at the way her former employer was able to engender fear in her employees. Frequent threats of legal action, of termination of employment and of closing the centre, none of which came about, were used as threats against staff. Several of the staff of the centre were also personal friends of the employer and this allowed the employer to form power blocs within the centre against individual staff members such as Marsha.

J.N. What did [your employer] do that allowed her to affect what you did in that way? How would you sum up [your employer's] style?

If you don't toe the line she rules by fear. 'I'm paying your wages, I can get rid of you'. There's no feeling that you're part of a team and you're there helping for the good of the children, it's all hers. She owns the centre, what is in the centre is hers, and she'd do it how she wants to do it and if you don't like it you get out.

Like Joanna, Marsha believed that tension amongst the staff did not affect the way the children in the centre were cared for. Despite exhaustion, depression and consequent pressure at home with her own family, Marsha kept doing the best she could for the children in the centre.

> But I put up with it.....It was very hard making that decision from 'Yes I hate the place, I'm going to le've', that's sort of such an easy comment to make, to the actual fact of "Yes, my notice is going in, I've got to go'.....[It's] such an easy thing to sort of say, but very hard to actually do it because you know the stress of actually finding another job is horrible.

Summary

Common threads can be seen amongst the accounts of the three women with experience of work in privately owned centres. The most overwhelming of these is the intense vulnerability which they had experienced as a consequence of having their employer constantly in close proximity. For all three women this had resulted from being exposed to the financial stresses facing their employer, despite each of them feeling that they should not be privy to such concerns.

The close monitoring of their work by their employer had also meant, particularly for Joanna and Marsha, that they had been unable to form close bonds with other staff and they had remained isolated from their colleagues; in the case of Joanna, for seven years. The general absence of staff meetings in private centres, except for the one where Amanda was now working, was identified by all three as an important factor which undermined their relationships with other staff and their feelings about themselves. The withholding of information by employers and, in Lorraine's case by her

previous supervisor, had also led to feelings of isolation. In Lorraine's present centre she attributed the isolation from colleagues which she was experiencing to the weight of her administrative responsibilities, even though she had considerable support from her employers in her role as centre supervisor.

Another consequence of the vulnerability Joanna, Marsha and Amanda had experienced was the obvious partiality they perceived on the part of their employers. Personal friendships or preferences between their employers and other staff members had led to stressful situations for each of the women. Lorraine had also experienced this type of partiality in a non-profit centre where the supervisor had the power to make major decisions about staffing, such as leave.

In addition to this isolation, all three of the women from private centres were, or had been, experiencing harassment in some form from their employer. In Marsha's case this amounted to direct threats, whilst for Joanna and Amanda the intimidation was more subtle. Joanna had experienced a progressive undermining of her position of responsibility, as had Marsha, to a lesser extent. The professional undermining of all three women had occurred when they had each been expected to implement programmes of care and education which they had no part in planning, despite their training and experience. In contrast to this, Smith and Swain (1988) point out that

> [an] important step towards improving job satisfaction is for childcare centres to use a team approach. A chief cause of dissatisfaction and tension is hierarchical, authoritarian centre management. Tizard et al. (1980) found that lack of staff autonomy in institutions for children was associated with a lower quality of care.....The keys to having an effective staff are a cooperative approach, with every individual staff member having an important part to play, being able to take initiatives rather than waiting to be told what to do, and regular participation in joint planning and decision-making (pp. 152 - 153).

Working with untrained staff and high staff turnover were mentioned by all three women from private centres as particularly stressful aspects of their work. In the case of Marsha and Joanna providing 'on the job' training for such staff had become an additional responsibility.

All four women had become committed members of their industrial union *as a consequence of their negative experiences*. For each of the women the support of the local union organisers was highly valued but even this was not enough to make them feel able to challenge their employers, some of whom were vocally anti-union. In the case of both Marsha and Amanda, they had eventually resigned from their positions rather than continue to experience such stressful work environments and, at the time of being interviewed, Joanna was also seeking a position elsewhere. Amanda had successfully secured a position in another private centre and was experiencing much better pay and conditions, including regular staff meetings.

As in the survey responses summarised in Chapter five, each of these women highly valued the intrinsic rewards of their positions. In addition to this, each of the women from private centres had not been confident that they could find work elsewhere, increasing their feelings of desperation and depression. When questioned as to their reasons for continuing to work for so long in such difficult circumstances, all four women mentioned either that *they had not known about how much better conditions were in other centres* or that *they needed to keep their jobs* for family and/or financial reasons. Each woman also valued the contact with children and parents that their job provided and, when questioned, said they believed that the stresses which they were, or had been

experiencing with their employers *were not affecting their work with children and parents.*

That each of these women could have experienced such similar conditions in a variety of centres (six in all) and across and lengthy period of time (Lorraine's experiences dated from nine years ago) is clearly more than coincidental; that many of the experiences related were so recent is also a cause for concern. In hindsight, each of the women was able to suggest reasons why they believed they had been treated badly by their employers and, in every case, these reasons relied heavily upon *concerns about the suitability of their employer for their role.* That each of these women should have suffered so greatly from personality difficulties with their employers, as well as difficulties over professional conduct, further illustrates their vulnerability.

Chapter seven

Discussion

Any study of childcare inevitably raises many complex issues about women and society because of the way that childcare prompts debate about fundamental concerns within feminism and women's sphere: the care of children, women's work, and the role of communities and the state in relation to families, to name but a few. Debate about childcare also triggers a number of complex theoretical questions, chiefly to do with the place of caring and nurturing work in western capitalist societies and its social and economic value. For the women surveyed and interviewed for this study, these issues are experienced at the daily, personal level, the level of praxis.

This chapter places the experiences of the women involved in this study within the context of the historical development of childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand and attempts to articulate these experiences in terms of the theoretical perspectives described in earlier chapters. In particular, the chapter will focus on a number of key themes. Firstly, the concept of feminisation will be discussed and its links to childcare, including the power of the affective realm in influencing women's responses to their employment experiences. Secondly, the tension experienced by childcare workers when childcare services are provided on a profit-making basis will be considered. Issues of 'status' in childcare are discussed, and it will be argued that the status debate has distracted from the underlying issues to do with

women's role as caregiver. Finally, the failure of liberal feminism to make change for childcare and childcare workers and the threat currently posed to childcare by neo-liberal economic theory are discussed in order to highlight the continuing challenges facing childcare in the 1990s.

Throughout this discussion the main focus of this study will be considered: the experiences of workers in non-profit, compared to privately owned childcare centres, and how their *shared*, as well as *contrasting* experiences serve to reveal the unresolved issues about women and society inherent in the childcare debate.

Feminisation and Childcare

The pivotal concept in any consideration of women's caring and nurturing work is that of feminisation. Childcare work has come to bear all the hallmarks of 'feminine' work, including passivity, tolerance and nurturance. Socialist feminist theorists, in combining the concept of feminisation with that of alienation, have documented the ways in which feminisation *itself* works to alienate women from themselves, their work and each other. By constraining women to a narrow set of *positions*, as described by Connell (1983) feminisation has hindered the development of women's full potential.

Feminisation and Self-esteem

Craig (1991) describes the phenomena of feminisation in relation to women's caring work and its promotion of self-esteem by the way it validates women's contribution and usefulness to community and society. This study also reveals the

extent to which women are constrained by their feminisation into poor self-esteem and narrow positions. Almost all of the women involved in this study mentioned contact with children as the most satisfying aspect of their work. Clearly they placed enormous value on the *intrinsic rewards* of their jobs, invariably mentioning the affective aspects of their work ahead of pay and conditions; in fact, pay was only mentioned by one of the 32 women responding to the survey as a positive aspect of her work. The intrinsic rewards gained from caring for children and their parents were not only the most valuable aspects of the job for most of the women, but were the reason why they had *chosen* this line of work and the reason why they *stayed*. This study confirms the importance of affirmation by others, particularly children and parents, for childcare workers. In fact, it could be argued that such intrinsic rewards serve to confirm for them their feminine identity.

Feminisation and Alienation

The Marxist concept of alienation argues that, under capitalism, wage labourers have been

> .....deprived of control over their own labour power [and] are forced to work according to the dictates of the capitalist class. Consequently, workers' products are taken from them and used against them, their fellow workers are made into competitors and the work process becomes an exhausting interruption of their "real" lives.....[Alienation] fragments not only the human community; it also fragments the human individual (Jaggar, 1983, p. 308).

Furthermore, socialist feminist theorists argue that, for women, femininity *itself* is alienation. Jaggar (1983) expands on this claim thus:

> .....in contemporary society, women are alienated from all aspects of their own labour, from other women and from children. Above all, their definition as feminine alienates them from men and from themselves. Male-dominant culture, as all feminists have observed, defines masculinity and femininity as contrasting forms. In contemporary society, men are defined as active, women as passive; men are intellectual, women are intuitive; men are inexpressive, women are emotional.....ad nauseam.....[To] the extent that women and men conform to gendered definitions of their humanity, they are bound to be alienated from themselves. The concepts of femininity and masculinity force both men and women to overdevelop certain of their capacities at the expense of others.....women become excessively nurturant and altruistic.....Both sexes are alienated from their humanity (p. 316).

The way in which Amanda, Marsha and Joanna had been alienated from their own feelings about their work, their colleagues and, in Amanda's case, from the children, is absolutely striking. By implying that staff are in competition for wages and/or responsibility from a finite pool of resources, each of their employers had been able to drive these women into a private despair of vulnerability and depression. This had also happened to Lorraine in a non-profit centre, where the roles of staff were constrained to the point where, like Joanna and Marsha, she was unable to share her frustration and confusion with her colleagues.

All four of the women interviewed were, or had been, experiencing a powerful sense of isolation from other childcare workers, including those in the same centre. The methods by which their employers had, in each case, been able to divide staff from one another were not particularly subtle but were certainly effective. By not allowing any time for staff to gather together as a group without the presence of the employer the private centre employers had been able to curtail unrest amongst staff. The additional demands of the day-to-day work meant that staff had little time to get together to exchange ideas. Joanna in particular spoke of the systematic

way in which she was not only being isolated from other staff but pitted against them in management terms. Although Joanna was a friend of the staff member who had had some of Joanna's role delegated to her, Joanna had not discussed this turn of events with the colleague concerned.

All of the women surveyed and/or interviewed who had worked in private centres had some negative comment to make about working for a private employer, in contrast to the overwhelming majority of positive comments made by workers in non-profit centres. In the case of each non-profit centre, the 'employer' was not present on a day-to-day basis and the supervisor had been delegated considerable responsibility in dealing with staff matters; this occurred to the extent that some women answering the survey thought that their supervisor *was* their employer. Clearly, the constant presence of the employer made staff particularly vulnerable to intimidation.

Whilst it is certainly common for workers to carry out their daily tasks alongside the owner of the business in many situations, this situation seems to have particular implications for women working in childcare centres. The childcare worker's role, being heavily feminised, dictates a style of work which is highly affective and nurturant. In contrast to this, the relationship between employer and employees in the same setting implies an imbalance of power, an alienation of women from control over their jobs. This alienation had been experienced by all four of the women who were interviewed; they were each able to recount situations in which

they had had control over their work, which they had seen as theirs due to their training and experience, wrested from them, particularly in professional matters such as planning programmes of care and education for the children.

Feminisation and Hegemony

Both socialist and liberal feminists argue that the feminised roles to which society has assigned women have become so clearly defined that women *themselves* have thoroughly internalised these positions, and that this is particularly characteristic of caring work. How has this been able to happen? In the past, childcare workers have comprised a model example of a 'feminised' work force, with little training, no union protection and low rates of retention. Nuttall (1988) in a study conducted in a Christchurch childcare centre, considered the impact of *hegemony* in perpetuating childcare workers' passive responses to the negative aspects of their jobs.

Hegemony, broadly defined, is the exhibition of a set of responses to oppression by an oppressed group to the point where they are supporting and maintaining their own oppression. The childcare workers who participated in the 1988 study exhibited one of the key characteristics of a feminised work force: they did not wish to 'rock the boat'. This also coincides with statements by Clark *et al.* (1983) who argued that many childcare workers do not wish to become active in improving their own pay and conditions. The concept of hegemony serves as a useful tool in explaining why childcare workers have often been unable to articulate their own oppression and struggle for change.

Hegemony has undoubtedly played a major part in complicating employer/employee relations in childcare centres. As Clark *et al* (1983.) point out, it has been difficult for childcare workers to separate out their need for professional and collegial support, by way of unionisation from their close contact with parents, whom childcare workers saw as suffering should workers agitate for better wages and conditions. In this way, *childcare workers have taken the responsibility for affordable, good quality childcare off their employers.* Not only has childcare workers' reticence to demand higher wages allowed parents' fees to be kept down, it has also allowed employers to, in theory anyway, maintain profitable margins. This is hegemony in action.

It is important however to acknowledge that childcare workers are not to *blame* for their response to their circumstances; hegemony by its nature is extremely insidious in its impact. All childcare workers are subject to the effects of hegemony to some extent, but for those working in privately owned centres, there is the *additional* facet of working to sustain their employer's profit margin.

Feminisation and Low Pay

Pettygrove *et al.* (1984) suggest that childcare workers often accept low pay because they so enjoy the intrinsic rewards of the work and this would seem to be borne out by the present study. This phenomena has acted in concert with the way in which the female workforce has been consigned by capitalist economies into an easily exploited pool of reserve labour, poorly paid, non-unionised and isolated

from each other. The combination of women's work and low pay is thus powerfully reinforced, not just in economic terms, *but in women's minds*. Clark *et al.* (1983), in describing the struggle to form the Early Childhood Workers Union, argue that many childcare workers *themselves* were resistant to arguments for increased industrialisation. The concept of feminisation, with its overwhelming reliance on passivity, ensures that unionisation is distasteful for a feminised workforce.

Childcare and Profit

Use of the concept of alienation is one attempt to explain why workers experience the tension between their focus on the affective realm and their employer's focus on the capitalist realm. Another way of characterising this tension, often referred to by liberal feminists, is the distinction between the 'public' sphere and the 'private' sphere.

The link between childcare and mothering, described in Chapter one, has ensured that childcare work has been placed firmly within the private sphere. Whilst this placement may be part of the liberal, indeed the capitalist ideal, the reality of modern society is that many families seek care for their children outside the home, and childcare has been forced into the public realm. Once there, services could be offered by the state (i.e. the taxpayer), the community (i.e. non-profit interests) or by groups or individuals for profit.

As Cook (1985) has pointed out, in the absence of alternatives, private operators have emerged to meet the enormous demand for childcare services. However, Cook also makes a strong plea for excluding private interests from childcare.

> If childcare services are to be ultimately in the interests of children, *profit has no place*. Beyond the rhetoric of providing efficient services that meet consumer needs, the consumers of E.C.E. services must not be objectified into money terms. A child's education should not be a marketable product, but *something a child is entitled to by right*.....It is in the interests of the children that the profit motive with all its potential for abuse play no part in an education service (1985, p. 78, author's emphasis).

The argument that the care and education of children, closely defined in capitalist societies as a *private* concern, should not be tainted by the interests of the *public* sphere (i.e. commercial interests) is, of course, representative of an ideology. The belief that making money has no place where young children are concerned is revealed in the comments of several of the women involved in this survey and continues to be debated in the childcare sector (particularly when issues of funding and advocacy of the various childcare services are under consideration by government).

The Tension Between Capitalism and Feminisation

Both the surveys and the interviews revealed the imposition of the realm of capital into the realm of feminised work as a source of tension for women working in private centres. Many of the workers in private centres experienced a clash between their desire to be affective and nurturant with those with whom they worked and the constant reminder that money was at the core of the operation of the centre.

For Marsha, Joanna and Amanda this tension was absolutely overt; money had become the overriding factor in the way they were approached by their employers and financial difficulties had become a source of intimidation. At the same time, each of these women, like most of those surveyed, claimed that money was not the reason why they worked in childcare; they were primarily there because of the intrinsic rewards of their caring and nurturing work. The financial circumstances of their employer were a visible and stressful aspect of their employment. Their employers each made it clear that their continued employment hinged on the continued financial viability of the centre and that by receiving wages, and certainly if receiving above award wages, *these women somehow had responsibility for any financial difficulties the employer might be experiencing.*

Whilst it would be naive to suggest that the managers of non-profit centres remain blissfully untainted by the need to at least break even in their operations, it seems characteristic of non-profit centres that the financial basis of the business is not part of the day to day concerns of staff; they are employed to work with the children and parents in a clearly defined affective role. Even for Lorraine, who holds considerable responsibility for financial management of the centre she supervises, concerns about money were not paramount; she was there for the children and the collective style of management of the centre meant that she was well supported in her role and had other people, not employed in the centre, with whom she could share management concerns. *In non-profit centres, money is the means to an end, not the end in itself.*

Childcare and Arguments About 'Status'

Internationally, discussions surrounding the poor pay and working conditions of childcare workers inevitably fall back on issues of 'status'. Chapters one, two and three have described the pattern of invisibility which has characterised childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand since the 1800s and the poor status of childcare workers and of the early childhood field generally is now well documented. At the most basic level the low status assigned to childcare has resulted in poor wages and conditions of service throughout the childcare field. This issue of status was highlighted as a key challenge to be confronted in the Report of the Working Party into Early Childhood Education (the Meade report) in 1988. The report notes, in particular, the low rates of pay for early childhood workers "clearly reflect[ing] the belief that the care of children is not considered "real" work and therefore requires no payment" (pp. 32 - 33). Meade also compares rates of pay in early childhood with those in primary and secondary schools and attributes high staff turnover to low of pay. The report also highlights the shortage of trained staff in early childhood and the structural barriers to policy and implementation for early childhood within the Department of Education as evidence of low status (pp. 33 - 35).

The Status of Childcare and the 'Cult of Mothering'

The 'hidden past' for childcare which Cook (1985) describes is difficult to comprehend in the 1990s when childcare is now so widely and publicly available. However the origins of childcare in the 1800s as a service for destitute and

working class women ensured that, from the beginning, it would be considered as something aberrant, a necessary evil. While other early childhood services *with an emphasis on the importance of maternal involvement* slowly grew in strength and recognition, childcare remained a 'backyard' service precisely because by its very nature, childcare is necessary in the absence of a full-time 'mother'.

The link between the 'cult of mothering', which has been so pervasive in attitudes towards childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the low status of childcare work (combined with the consistent overlooking of childcare services by government agencies) has been widely argued. The widespread belief that young children should be cared for exclusively by their mothers, reinforced by the acceptance of maternal deprivation theory in the 1950s, contributed to a frequently hostile view of childcare services, reflected in the rejection of the proposed Child Care Association which Sonja Davies experienced in the 1960s. At the same time, this argument has been combined with the belief that the care of children is not 'real' work, since it is something that mothers have customarily come to do, and without pay. Cook (1983c) describes the prevailing view of childcare workers as "girls, ladies, aunties - feminine, ladylike and motherly" and makes a plea for increased politicisation of women in childcare.

Such increased politicisation has sometimes had to take place in the face of considerable opposition from childcare workers *themselves*. Nuttall (1988) argues that the childcare workers who participated in her study had been so long indoctrinated into the low value of their work that they now felt powerless to deal

with even minor setbacks in their employment situation. They not only experienced this indoctrination as part of society and its attitudes toward childcare generally, but in quite overt ways from their employers. Childcare workers, *as much as any other group of people in society*, are subject to what Meade (1988) calls the "myths" about early childhood care and education.

At a more disturbing level, some childcare workers are *themselves* opposed to the notion of extra-familial care, and comments along these lines appeared within the present survey when workers were asked about the most difficult aspects of their work. This phenomena is not unique. Innes and Innes (1984) discuss it in relation to family daycare workers in the U.S.A., pointing out that childcare workers are subject to negative attitudes towards childcare as much as anyone else. The question remains as to the way in which these women, who are articulating ideologies so clearly opposed to childcare, are dealing with parents using childcare on a day to day basis. The work of these women would seem to be redolent of the 'missionary' attitude of childcare workers one hundred years before, who sought to care for the 'poor, destitute children' whose mothers were unable or chose not to stay at home as full time parents. In this way, childcare workers actively choose to identify themselves with a low status task, that of caring for young children.

Status and Unionisation

Smith and Swain (1988), in suggesting a number of reasons why childcare began to grow in status during the 1980s, make particular reference to the formation of the Early Childhood Workers Union (E.C.W.U.) as a key event. Although formation of the union occurred relatively recently in New Zealand's industrial history and many workers were originally reticent to become unionised, the union made rapid progress in achieving gains for childcare workers. Wells (1991) summarizes the enormous gains made by the E.C.W.U. in the face of strong opposition. Along with several other writers in the field (e.g. Cook, 1985; Meade, 1990), Wells argues that well-coordinated and determined pressure exerted by a group of women whose philosophical aims were clearly articulated has been able, on a number of occasions, to make gains for childcare against the flow of government economic policy.

This determination to keep struggling in order to advocate the interests of women and children, with its resulting need to have a firm and cohesive philosophical base, has been a feature of the early childhood movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand for several decades, despite the diversity of early childhood services. This philosophical base was effectively synthesised in the Meade report (1988) and again reflects the central commitment of early childhood workers to *the quality care and education of young children*. This position has allowed groups such as the E.C.W.U. to rapidly gain credibility with early childhood workers who have

been able to experience the benefits of the E.C.W.U.'s campaigns through improved wages and conditions and increased funding to centres.

Although all of those surveyed for this study who had been in childcare for more than twelve months noted that their pay and conditions had improved, overall the women involved in this study seemed to have a somewhat limited awareness of their industrial position. Several did not know which award they were employed under or if they were receiving any additional benefits. A notable similarity between all four women interviewed for this study was their firm commitment to union affiliation. All four had not initially taken an interest in union matters and Joanna had not been a member. Once faced with extremely stressful relations with their employers however, they had each sought considerable support from their union.

At the wider level, the disparity between workers' optimism about their own future in childcare and their pessimism about the future of childcare generally, sharply contrasted within several individual surveys, reveals a lack of understanding of how wider government and social policy impacts directly on the individual. This lack of understanding is certainly not peculiar to the childcare field and for policy makers and politicians this dislocation is extremely convenient, since it means that individual employers will bear the brunt of workers' responses to policies which impact on their daily lives (such as the recent reduction in funding to centres) rather than workers directing their anger at the political and ideological basis of the problem. Union involvement threatens this convenient lack of understanding,

since it seeks to raise workers' consciousness of the political and economic forces from which their oppression originates.

At the day to day level however, union affiliation has its limitations; a broad understanding of issues of power and economics is not enough to protect workers from intimidation in the work place. Harassment in a number of forms was reported by the women surveyed and interviewed for this study who had worked in private centres. This included lack of recognition of qualifications, partiality in dealings with staff, and refusal to pay wages at the appropriate step. The effect of this harassment was not to mobilise these women into taking industrial action; *they simply sought work elsewhere.* Indeed, all four of the women interviewed indicated that harassment by their employer (a role delegated to the supervisor where Lorraine had formerly worked) was a direct cause of staff turnover in their centre. Should any of these women have been successful in laying a complaint against their employer, they would have to continue to work directly alongside that person. In a work environment often requiring considerable emotional fortitude, such a situation would be untenable.

The employers of women from private centres involved in this study were clearly able to capitalise on this emotional vulnerability. Amanda, Marsha and Joanna had all been directly threatened by their employers about involvement with their union to the point of being warned, in Marsha's case, of dismissal should she continue to be a member of the union. Despite such action being illegal, such threats were sufficient to make Marsha's situation extremely distressing. Union affiliation was threatening to each of the employers involved since it allowed these women to find

out what they were entitled to and with that knowledge they gained power and a new understanding of their low status in the work place. Recent legislation in New Zealand, particularly the 1991 Employment Contracts Act, reveals awareness of this link between unionisation and empowerment and seeks to minimise the impact of unions on the work force.

Status and Training

Since the 1970s the link between status and training has been a consistent feature of reports seeking improved childcare provision. The impact of the introduction of three-year early childhood training into this country's Colleges of Education from 1988 onwards has yet to be researched but it is clear that arguments in favour of increased training were not just about improving the quality of available services but about increasing the status of the sector, and this is borne out by the Meade report (1988).

> Disparities in pay for different types of workers in early childhood care and education will also have an effect. Unless changes are made, the 90 or so graduated from the integrated training course at teachers' colleges who enter the job marked in 1991 are going to start work in an environment where kindergarten teachers get paid more than childcare workers, even though they all do essentially the same work (Meade, 1988, p. 34).

There is also some evidence that support from the New Zealand Kindergarten Teachers Association in the mid-1980s for three year training was primarily based on the desire to make the length of early childhood training equivalent to that of *primary* school teachers in order to improve the status of kindergarten work (Macartney, 1992).

A notable feature of the present survey was the high number of women involved in some form of ongoing training. Recent changes to legislative requirements for trained staff in centres has prompted a much higher demand for continuing training for childcare workers. However, many of the staff surveyed were not in positions where they would be legally required to hold additional qualifications, nor did their survey responses indicate that they aspired to supervisory positions. Their motives for seeking additional training are therefore presumably related to either enhancing their skills and knowledge in working with young children, improving their employment prospects, moving them into a higher wage bracket, or some combination of these, all with the aim of raising their 'status'.

Although the survey revealed approximately the same proportions of trained to untrained staff in private and non-profit centres, Marsha and Joanna both reported particular difficulties involved in working with untrained staff, especially the way in which supporting untrained staff detracted from their own involvement with the children. In Joanna's case her workload was considerably increased by demands on her to train new staff 'on the job' and then deal with anxiety amongst the children once these staff subsequently left the centre. Minimum requirements for training of *all* staff would at least lessen this problem, irrespective of issues of status.

Difficulties with the Status Debate

What seems to be overlooked in discussions surrounding childcare work is that the history of childcare in New Zealand is often used in an *explanatory* sense when highlighting the low status of childcare in this country. There are a number of difficulties with this argument (not least of which is the implication that the invisibility of childcare and its poor status has somehow been women's fault) and it can be argued that the status debate has, in fact, distracted from the *real* issue, that of women's place in society.

Attempts to improve the status of childcare work by improving training, pay and conditions have met with some success for childcare workers, at least in the material sense, as outlined in Chapter three. However, arguments for improved status for childcare, such as that promoted by the Meade report (1988) fail to overlook the key question in the status debate: *Why does this work have such low status in the first place?* Although earlier Chapters have described the path of history which has led to the present *position* for childcare workers, such discussions rest on an assumption of caring and nurturing work as low status *from the beginning.*

For those involved in the advocacy of childcare, issues of pay, training and quality have been central to the definition of the status of the work involved. It is clear however from studies such as O'Rourke (1981) that the status of childcare work is

relative to that of related professions and, despite whatever one might believe philosophically about its importance, it *remains* of low status.

Amanda, when interviewed, spoke of the low value conferred on her chosen work by her social acquaintances, a phenomena often reported by those who work with young children. Cook (1983c), in promoting a "new consciousness of women workers in childcare", demonstrates the way that discussions surrounding childcare work have overlooked *fundamental problems in social relations* which dictate the status of childcare, irrespective of increased training, better pay and conditions and an enhanced 'consciousness' amongst childcare workers. *Is childcare low status because it is done by women* or *do women do the work of childcare because it is low status? Or both?* This question has never been adequately addressed by arguments surrounding women's caring and nurturing work, particularly by liberal feminists, yet it must be resolved before proposals for change can be realistically promoted.

The Failure of Liberal Feminism

Difficulties with the status debate reveal, more than anything else, the failure of liberal feminism to confront the challenges posed by childcare and the tensions experienced by childcare workers and by women who use childcare. Cook (1983a) effectively summarizes the question liberal feminists have avoided, in arguing that "childcare policies, which are deeply rooted in the belief systems of our society reflect the unresolved conflicts about the role of men, women, the community and the state towards the responsibility for the care of children" (1983a, p. 3).

This statement also reflects the aspirations of socialist feminists, who believed that by prompting debate about the *need* for childcare, these conflicts of role would be revealed and resolved. This patently has not occurred. As the childcare industry has developed in capitalist nations, it has remained clearly marginalised as 'women's work'. One of the central beliefs of liberal feminism has been that by involving more women in the public sphere, the value of 'women's work' would increase in status. The work of writers such as Waring (1988) and Horsfield (1988) reveals that this has not been the case and suggests that only through major changes in the systems of social relations between men and women and systems of economics can women hope to achieve changes benefitting women and the work of caring for children. Until these fundamental questions can be resolved, attempting to deal with problems of 'status' by adjusting rates of pay and increasing training will not demand that society reassess the value of the work involved.

Liberal feminists, in promoting childcare, viewed it primarily as a means to an end, a service which would allow women to enter the public sphere by relieving them of part of their private role; that there should be a distinction between these roles was not challenged. Whilst certainly increasing the movement of women into the public sphere, liberal feminism did nothing to reduce the domestic expectations placed upon women.

For childcare workers there was the additional implication that their work in providing this service was devalued to the level of women's traditional manual work of caring for children, a role which had always been unpaid or poorly paid

and tended to be hidden. By viewing the childcare role as part of women's established cycle of dependence and self-sacrifice, liberal feminism *reinforced* the alienation of women from the social and economic potential of the childcare role. Connell (1983) links reliance on the concept of 'role' to conservative forces in society and suggests that, by forcing individuals to adopt *positions* within society, reliance on role theory severely restricts human potential. Liberal feminists overlooked the fact that the alienation inherent in the childcare role was *not* traditional for women, but part of the nature of capitalist economy, which as Chodorow (1979) demonstrates, was a relatively recent phenomenon.

Childcare and Neo-liberalism

To suggest however that the low status of childcare has been entirely a product of society's beliefs and opinions about women and mothers would be naive. Historical patterns of government policy towards women and young children reveal a much more forthright agenda for retaining the view of childcare and 'women's work' as being of low economic value and, therefore, of low status. The deepening economic recession within western capitalist economies since the mid-1970s has been paralleled by a rise in neo-liberal approaches to social and economic solutions concerning issues such as unemployment. Part of these economic solutions rests upon a clear relegation of 'women's work' into the sphere of low-waged (preferably un-waged), low-status occupations.

Promoters of neo-liberal solutions have sought to give credence to the neo-liberal ideology through the use of research which criticises social trends such as

increasing use of extra-familial care. The political need to secure jobs for men returning from active service after World War II was conveniently supported by maternal deprivation theory, and writers such as Morgan (1975) have clearly identified the link between the theory and economic imperatives of the day.

Neo-liberal economic policies espoused by the New Zealand Treasury and by the current government reveal an almost identical agenda. For example, funding for infant care in childcare centres has been considerably reduced, prompting fees increases to parents, making it increasingly difficult for women to afford childcare. At the same time, government initiatives for early childhood have been directed into supporting a low-cost, home based programme, with an emphasis on maternal education and involvement.

Treasury has made its view of childcare absolutely clear: that it is the responsibility of individuals within the *private* sphere. Liberal feminism, which shares its basis in traditional liberal theory with neo-liberal economics, cannot challenge such a view of the role of the family and so supports the continued driving of childcare back into the home and into the hands of individual women. Under the fourth Labour government, childcare became an area of growing state intervention, *against* the trend of economic policy in New Zealand, but the current government appears committed to curtailing any further gains for the early childhood sector by reducing state intervention in the early childhood sector as far as is possible (for example, by the introduction of bulk funding to kindergartens).

Meade (1990) describes the impact of Labour's policy on early childhood thus:

> The benefits for women we have seen emerge in the first half of 1990 have been:
> - significant salary increases for childcare workers in three of the four Awards,
> - a lowering of fees, especially for under two year olds,
> - improved access with the (slow) increases in places, and
> - more jobs for women in the sector (1990, p. 13).

In responding to the survey for this study, childcare workers no longer shared Meade's optimism for the future of childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Most of the surveys were completed between the change of government in late 1990 and the 1991 Budget and there was, at that time, considerable anxiety as to what the Budget might bring. The reduction in infant funding signalled by the 1991 Budget, and comments such as that made to Joanna by her employer to the effect that reduced funding placed jobs in the centre under direct threat, would seem to bear out these anxieties.

Other distinctive features of neo-liberal economic theory, now promoted for several years by the Treasury, have surfaced in recent government policy on early childhood, including the targeting of childcare users for financial assistance rather than the direct funding of services and reduction in the training requirements for supervisors of centres, a symptom of wider trends to deprofessionalise teachers and early childhood workers.

Neo-liberalism and Privatisation in Childcare

The diversity of modes of delivery in the early childhood field in Aotearoa/New Zealand, including widespread privatisation, has been held up by the Treasury

(1990) as a model for delivery throughout the education sector. Diversity is necessary for competition, the cornerstone of neo-liberal theories for economic recovery. Competition in the marketplace is based on diversity of the *quality* of services available and in childcare this includes variations in the working conditions available to staff, as evidenced by this study.

The success of privatisation hinges upon the delivery of goods and services superior in quality and price to that of to one's competitors, whilst at the same time keeping costs to a minimum. Should childcare centre owners fail to do so, their centres would close. Workers' wages are by far the largest cost involved in operating a childcare centre and any stringency which can be applied serves to protect profit margins. The pattern of poorer pay and conditions in private centres as compared to non-profit centres, apparent once again in this study, is now too consistently identified by research as to be simply labelled as conjecture or union inspired rhetoric. Meade (1990), in discussing the benefits of increased state funding to early childhood centres, suggests that *"women have not benefited so well in some centres where profit is the main objective of the operators"* (p. 13, my emphasis).

This minimising of benefits for workers in private centres has been made possible by a lack of firm accountability measures for the use of government money in childcare centres. Although all centres receiving government funding are required to be chartered, in practice no legislation exists to demand that private centres improve staff wages and conditions, despite recent attempts by the Ministry of Education to make centres more accountable.

Recent industrial law reform in Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly the Employment Contracts Act has made it harder for workers to defend themselves against unfair treatment in the workplace. At the same time, high unemployment and lengthy stand-down periods for workers who have left their jobs and wish to receive the unemployment benefit act as enormous disincentives for workers to leave unhappy work situations. As Marsha said, "'Yes, my notice is going in, I've got to go'.....[It's] such an easy thing to sort of say, but very hard to actually do it because you know the stress of actually finding another job is horrible". And why did Joanna stay? "Oh, I think only just the simple fact that I need the job, I've got to work, just for my family's security".

Prospects for Change

Given the current state of government policy towards early childhood in New Zealand, what hope can be held out for prospects for change? In the short term, childcare advocates continue to lobby for improved conditions for parents, children and childcare workers but ultimately, as has been argued throughout this chapter, such changes only amount to fine tuning a values system which accords low value to childcare work. It is not an increased consciousness of childcare which is necessary, but an *alternative* consciousness of *women* and *work*.

Conclusion

This study has investigated and compared the pay and working conditions of a number of women employed in private and non-profit childcare centres and placed these findings within broader historical and theoretical contexts. In the course of this process, a number of unresolved issues are apparent and the question arises as to the prospects for change, both at the individual level for the women whose voices are heard here and for the wider early childhood field. In conclusion, some of these unresolved issues are identified here and the possibilities of the socialist feminist analysis are briefly considered.

Unresolved Issues

In the course of responding to the surveys and interviews, a number of comments were made by participants in the study which merit further investigation. The most obvious of these is a consideration of the impact of increased funding on the circumstances of childcare workers, both at the level of pay and award conditions and at the level of the environment, both physical and social, in which they work. Many of the women surveyed indicated that they were experiencing better pay and conditions than in the past. Although this could be due, to some extent, to annual increments in wages, most of the women surveyed were employed under the Consenting Parties award which has recently undergone major increases, particularly in rates of pay. A central

rationale behind increased funding to the early childhood sector was the improvement of pay and conditions for early childhood professionals, so it is gratifying to see this reflected in the survey responses. The impact of recent *decreases* in funding will therefore need to be carefully monitored to detect any impact on staff wages and conditions, and this work is being carried out by the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa.

A second issue which arose in two of the four interviews was the belief on the part of the women being interviewed that the stresses they were experiencing in the workplace did not affect the way they responded to the children; in fact Marsha and Joanna argued that they actively continued to do their best for the children in the centre *despite* their own difficulties. Research cited elsewhere in this study suggests that a harmonious working environment greatly enhances the quality of the work being done with children and parents and that only in such an environment can early childhood workers maintain high levels of motivation, energy and enthusiasm. The other two women interviewed both noted that their general health and well being had been affected by how they were feeling about their jobs and that this had had an impact on how they worked with the children. A study of the extent to which caregiver behaviour is compromised by poor working conditions not only has the potential for further investigation, but would seem urgent in the current climate of government policy towards early childhood.

A third issue, which serves to demonstrate the point that it is dangerous to generalise about the distinctions between private and non-profit centres, is the case of Lorraine's unhappy experiences whilst working in a non-profit centre. Whilst certain similarities may be drawn between the role of Lorraine's

supervisor in the centre and the role of private employers in other centres, there remains the evidence that Lorraine experienced similar vulnerability and intimidation in a non-profit centre to other interviewees from private centres. In contrast to this Amanda was now enjoying, albeit with some reservations, her new position in a privately owned centre. Interestingly, both Lorraine and Amanda identified the co-operative and collegial approach of the centres in which they now worked as one of the key factors in their job satisfaction; they were both experiencing positive support from their employers, irrespective of whether the employer was an individual or a committee of parents, and enjoying their participation in shared decision making.

Another interesting contradiction apparent in responses to the written surveys was the optimism of childcare workers about their own positions whilst at the same time being pessimistic about the future of childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It could be argued perhaps that a sense of optimism is an essential characteristic of those who work with young children and that this must be maintained even in a depressed economic and social climate. Certainly the timing of the surveys, immediately prior to the 1991 Budget, may well have affected responses to these questions.

Strategies for Individual Workers

The most urgent question arising from this study remains: *How can the childcare worker experiencing intimidation withstand such threats?* The women participating in this study had tried a variety of strategies, including ignoring the employer, seeking support from their industrial union, sharing their experiences with other workers in the centre, approaching higher

authorities such as the Ministry of Education with their concerns and, as a last resort, resigning. It would seem from this range of possibilities that it would be difficult for employers to continue to cause distress for their staff, yet it goes on: all of the employers described in this study continue to operate childcare centres and, in the case of those private employers who gave rise to concern, they continue to employ and supervise childcare workers in the same ways as they have done in the past. Informal networking in the early childhood community ensures that such employers are known throughout the profession as poor employers but in the current climate of high unemployment, including thousands of young, untrained women, a ready pool of childcare workers exists outside of the early childhood community. Marsha's case is an excellent example of this.

The advice of colleagues, including union officials, to workers in difficult situations is often to remain in the position and fight the employer through those official channels which remain under current industrial legislation,or by approaching the centres' licensing authority, the Ministry of Education. It would seem however from the experience of the women involved in this study that this is the least preferred option.

The distinctive feature of the situations in which staff *did* feel able to withstand pressure was, once again, a sense of *collective knowledge and responsibility*. Involvement with their union had been a positive and empowering step for all four of the women interviewed, even if they ultimately decided to resign. Through contact with other childcare workers the women gained a perspective on their own situations and were made aware of what they were entitled to and the experiences of colleagues in other centres. *Knowledge is power*. In a

political climate of anti-unionism it would seem more than ever essential that workers in vulnerable work environments, particularly women with little training and poor conditions, rely upon their collective strength. The imbalance of power between employer and workers is startlingly clear in the experiences of the women described here. *In becoming involved with their union, the women no longer felt alone.*

Prospects for Change.

Chapter two described the basis of two important feminist theories which have attempted to prompt and articulate change for women in society. Whilst liberal feminists of the 1970s undoubtedly brought childcare before the public view, liberal feminist theory generally failed to confront the underlying causes of women's oppression. For childcare workers, liberal feminism holds little hope for change. Although it seeks to make concessions at the practical level, translated into better conditions for staff and improved quality of care, such changes to not confront the low value accorded to work in childcare, nor do they seek to remove the key responsibility for the care and education of young children from individual families. During times of economic recession, the ability of many families to fully meet their economic and social needs is severely curtailed. Without more widespread adoption of responsibility for early childhood care and education, many families are unable to afford good quality extra-familial care whenever it is desirable or necessary.

The Possibilities of the Socialist Feminist Analysis

As described in Chapter three, socialist feminism demands a complete reappraisal of society's attitudes towards caring and nurturing work. By redefining the 'worth' of various types of employment according to their contribution to families, community and society, rather than in the simplest economic terms, work such as providing childcare receives an enormous boost in 'status'. Within a socialist feminist framework, political solutions become part of the day to day lives of families, rather than based around the interests of patriarchy and capital. In order for this to occur however, the development of a collective consciousness amongst childcare workers becomes a necessity. Without a wider understanding of the political agenda for childcare, workers are unable to articulate their own oppression on a day to day basis. Workers in private childcare centres, either consciously or unconsciously, continue to contribute their labour to the interests of capital.

Socialist feminism demands an enormous redefinition of the 'roles' accorded to members of society. Use of the concept of hegemony suggests that for women's roles to change it is women *themselves* who must first become aware of the extent of their oppression. In the case of the childcare workers interviewed for this study, this transformation has certainly occurred. Partly, this has been due to their contact with their union, which has afforded them a sense of collective consciousness. One of the most consistent themes of this study is that those workers who expressed greatest job satisfaction in their survey and interview responses are all involved in some form of collective power-sharing within their centre. The development of a collective

consciousness of the value of caring and nurturing work *throughout* society is an essential part of the socialist feminist agenda for change.

Socialist feminist theory articulates the ways in which patterns of social relations within capitalist societies constrain the members of those societies into narrow roles, so that the vested interests of capitalists continue to be protected. The efforts of those who promoted the Campaign for Quality Early Childhood during 1988, particularly those childcare workers who responded to the union's call for widespread lobbying of Members of Parliament, demonstrate the ways in which well co-ordinated and vocal lobbies, even from oppressed groups, can have an impact within powerful institutions.

The immediate prospects for childcare in the present decade remain uncertain. Funding, training and ease of access to childcare services, which have improved so much in the last ten years, are still subject to threats from economic initiatives to curb state spending and, in particular, spending in the areas which most benefit women and children. The optimism of the workers involved in this study is testimony to the energy of childcare workers everywhere to continue to struggle for widespread childcare provision of good quality and the stories of the four women interviewed demonstrate the potential of women in childcare to understand and fight for change.

Appendix A

Survey questions

CHILDCARE EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Part 1

1. How old are you?

2. How many dependents do you have (i.e. other people relying partly or fully on your economic support)?

3. What formal qualifications, apart from early childhood qualifications, do you have?

4. When did you gain these qualifications?

5. What formal early childhood qualifications do you have?

6. When did you get them?

7. What other experience or qualifications (not necessarily "officially" recognised) do you believe you have which qualify you to work in childcare?

8. How long have you worked in early childhood? (Please specify the type of work e.g. raising own children, voluntary work, paid full-time or part-time work, etc.)

9. Have you had any major breaks in your work history (i.e. longer than a month or two)? How long were these breaks?

10. For what reason(s) did you take these breaks?

11. What is the title of your current position in the centre where you work?

12. Where else have you had paid work in early childhood? (Include part-time and full-time positions, but please specify which is which.)

13. How long have you worked in this centre?

14. How long have you held your current position?

15. What award are you employed under?

16. What is your current hourly rate of pay?

17. What conditions of service do you receive, if any, which are over and above your award entitlement?

18. How many days leave did you take in 1990? (This includes leave for <u>any</u> reason.) Please specify the reasons for taking this leave.

Part 2

1. What on-going training, if any, are you involved in at the moment? (This includes all types of courses, irrespective of length. Also include any courses which you have completed this year, or have enrolled for this year but have not yet begun.)

2. What attracted you to work in childcare?

3. Why do you continue to work in childcare at present?

4. What aspects of your job do you value most?

5. What is/are the most difficult aspect(s) of your job?

6. What is/are the main difference(s) in your pay and working conditions at this centre, compared to other centres where you have worked?

6. What are the other significant differences between this centre and other centres where you have worked (e.g. size, numbers of staff or children, type of programme)?

7. What problems, if any, have you encountered in dealing with your employer in this centre?

8. What problems have you experienced in dealing with your employer(s) in other centres where you have worked?

9. If you could change aspects of your working conditions, what changes would you make, apart from increasing your wages?

10. How do you see your future in childcare?

11. How do you see the future of childcare in New Zealand?

12. Would you be prepared to be interviewed in more detail about some of the issues raised here?

Name.....

Telephone contact:.....(work).....(home)

Appendix B

Letter seeking survey permission

22 Banbury Street
Burnside
Christchurch 5

The Supervisor
.....
.....
Christchurch

10 June 1991

Dear .....,

My name is Joce Nuttall and I am currently employed as a lecturer in Early Childhood Programmes at the Christchurch College of Education. I am also completing a Master of Education degree at the University of Canterbury. During 1991 I am writing a thesis studying childcare workers in the Christchurch area.

In order to collect my data, I am surveying the staff of a number of centres. The survey is designed to gather a wide range of information about what it is like to work in childcare. I would be extremely grateful if you and your staff would consider completing a written survey. Each staff member would reply individually and all responses will be completely confidential. I would also welcome the opportunity to interview one or two of your staff in greater detail, should any of them be interested; again this would be absolutely confidential and I would be happy to arrange the interview at a time to suit the staff member.

Once all of the surveys and interviews are completed the results will be gathered together in a final report before the end of the year. You and your staff would be welcome to discuss the project with me at any time and would be invited to read and discuss the final report in both its draft and final stages.

I would be grateful if you would consider my request and discuss it with your staff at the earliest opportunity. If you agree to participate in the survey I would post the survey forms to your centre immediately, including instructions for their completion; I would be happy to also collect them in person at a pre-arranged time (some days later).

I am happy to answer any queries you may have concerning the survey, or the project generally, before you make your decision. I can be contacted by day at 348-2059 or at home (evenings) 358-7665.

Yours faithfully

Joce Nuttall

Appendix C

Survey instructions

Dear Childcare Employee,

Thank-you for agreeing to complete one of these survey forms!

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS THOROUGHLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. This questionnaire is in two parts. The first part asks for basic information about your pay and working conditions. The second part asks about your reasons for working in childcare and requires you to record your feelings on some topics as well as further basic information.

2. Complete the survey alone and in your own time. Do not discuss it with anyone else until you have completed it. (This is to ensure that the things you write are entirely your own thoughts and not affected by conversations with anyone else.) You may find it easiest to take the survey home and complete it when you have time to think your answers through thoroughly.

3. Read the whole survey through before you start, to get an idea of what is being asked. If any of the questions are unclear, telephone me at home (358-7665) in the evening or leave a message for me at work (348-2059) and I will return your call.

4. This survey is COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL. You will not be identified in the final report and no-one will see your survey except me. Any statements you make will not be referred on to your employer or work-mates. However, to avoid confusion, please write your name on the front cover of the survey in pencil. I will remove your name when the survey is returned to me and I will give your survey a code number.

5. If you are unsure of the answer to a specific question (e.g. how much your are paid per hour) do not try to find out the answer. Simply answer the question to the best of your ability and indicate that you were unsure of the answer. Don't ask your supervisor or employer for the answer.

6. Write as little or as much as you like. If you have nothing to say, just write "no comment". If you need more space, use another sheet of paper or go on to the back of the sheet.

7. If you have <u>any</u> questions about the survey or the project in general, feel free to telephone me at one of the numbers above. (Your supervisor also has a letter from me explaining the purpose of this research.)

Thanks a lot

Joce Nuttall

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